Pamela Cooper-White

Schönberg, Trauma, and the Unrepresentable

Why *Moses und Aron* Could Never Be Finished

"Den Widerspruch kannst du nicht lösen"
[*"You cannot solve the contradiction"*]
Moses' words to Aron, oratorio and Act III fragment, *Moses und Aron*[1]

Introduction

A longstanding controversy has surrounded one of Arnold Schönberg's greatest – yet unfinished – works: why the opera *Moses und Aron* remained incomplete. In spite of its standing as an undeniable masterwork – a Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* that simultaneously broke ground as a fully staged 12-tone opera employing massive forces of soloists, chorus and orchestra (described by an early commentator as *"a thousand-tongued orchestra"*[2]), and utilizing every possible instrumental tone color and vocal technique (*Sprechstimme*, coloratura, etc.), *Moses und Aron* is a full-scale work, and yet a torso. Before a decade had passed after Schönberg's death, and in spite of his own statements to the contrary, both critics, and musicologists familiar with Schönberg's life and works while he was still alive, were rushing to pass judgment on the opera's unfinished state. Many declared, one after the other, that the opera was, in essence, complete in its incompleteness at the end of Act II.[3] The published text-only version of Act III authorized by Schönberg's wife Gertrud

1 *Moses und Aron* (ASSV 1.2.1.1.), text and sketches published in Arnold Schönberg: *Moses und Aron. Oper in drei Akten. Entstehungsgeschichte, Texte und Textentwürfe zum Oratorium und zur Oper.* Edited by Christian Martin Schmidt (Mainz, Wien 1998) (Sämtliche Werke. Abteilung III: Bühnenwerke. Reihe B, Band 8, 2); quote from source TC (c. 1928, Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien [T09.01]; TC42 [18r], 242), repeated in source TI (c. 1930, T09.06; TI682 [22v[1]], 243) and TM (ca. 1934, T63.06; TM14 [2r], 251).

2 Karl H. Wörner: *Schönberg's 'Moses and Aaron'* (London 1963), 106.

3 Most notably, Theodor W. Adorno: Sacred Fragment, in *Quasi una Fantasia. Essays on Modern Music* (London 1992), 226; see also Oliver W. Neighbour: Art. Moses und Aron, in *Grove Music Online* (02.02.2024). For a discussion of the performance history of Act III, see Bluma Goldstein: *Reinscribing Moses. Heine, Kafka, Freud, and Schoenberg in a European Wilderness* (Cambridge 1992), 150–151; and musical reasons for the opera's incompleteness Pamela [Cooper-]White: *Schoenberg and the God-Idea. The Opera Moses und Aron* (Ann Arbor 1985), 231–232.

(an intermediate version among many handwritten drafts and sketches) was most often viewed by scholars as an unnecessary appendage.[4]

There is certainly truth to this argument. If one listens to any of the fine historic recordings of performances available today,[5] or – much better – if one is lucky enough to attend a live performance, it would seem that nothing is missing dramatically. In an early review in 1954 associated with the Hamburg premiere, Winfried Zillig opined,

> Perhaps it was humility that forbade him to complete this work. Perhaps, in his search, he sensed the temptation to bind to image and gesture whatever he had found. For one thing we do know of him, with absolute certainty: he 'wanted to be knowing' … And this desire 'to be knowing' found the most gripping possible expression in the first two acts of the opera.[6]

Karl Wörner, in the first full-length study of the opera, described this romantically in terms of Schönberg's compositional process as a product of mystical oneness with the divine:

> The work in the form we have it today, with the setting of the first two acts concluded, is complete. It is a whole. He who has experienced the unio mystica in which the opera was conceived and gestated, knows that it would have been completed if only external circumstances of the 1930s and, later, the composer's precarious health, had permitted it. 'It suffices to understand and experience the work in its present form. As it is, so was it to be', Gertrud Schoenberg writes in the epilogue to the vocal score published in 1957.[7]

The philosopher Theodor Adorno used the incompleteness of the opera to highlight all great artists' struggles with the inexpressibility of the transcendent:

> Important works of art are the ones that aim for an extreme; they are destroyed in the process and their broken outlines survive as the ciphers of a supreme, unnameable truth. It is in this positive sense that Moses und Aron is a fragment and it would not be extravagant to attempt to explain why it was left incomplete by arguing that it could not be completed. But such an explanation would have little to do with that notion of the tragic, the insoluble conflict between finite and infinite inherent in the subject matter Schönberg chose.[8]

4 Jan Assmann: Moses Tragicus: Freud, Schoenberg, and the Defeated Moses (Trans. Pamela Cooper-White), in *American Imago* 76/4 (2019), 569–588 (originally unpublished lecture "Moses tragicus. Freud, Schönberg und der scheiternde Moses," Sigmund Freud Museum, Wien, May 6, 2019).

5 The first recording, in 1957 coincided with the first fully staged performance of the opera (Acts I and II) in Zürich with Hans Rosbaud conducting (reissued by Sony in 2017). Notable performances appeared in the mid-1970s with Michael Gielen (ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien) and Pierre Boulez (BBC Symphony Orchestra), one in 1984 with George Solti (Chicago Symphony Orchestra), and one in 1996 with Boulez (Concertgebouw Orchestra). Most recently is a recording in 2014 by Sylvain Cambreling with the SWR Sinfonieorchester Baden-Baden und Freiburg.

6 Willi Reich: *Schönberg: A Critical Biography* (New York 1981), 184.

7 Karl H. Wörner: *Schönberg's 'Moses and Aaron'*, see fn. 2, 91.

8 Theodor W. Adorno: Sacred Fragment, see fn. 3, 226.

This view has become the standard interpretation. In 2007, Michael Cherlin states, *"there is nowhere left to go once Moses utters his last words of Act II, O Wort, du Wort das mir fehlt."*[9] Many, following Adorno, also see the incompleteness of the opera as a paradoxical testament to the impossibility of human art to express the transcendent. As Etty Mulder writes, *"the lack of music in the third act is its most important feature. The opera derives its importance from what is missing; it is a paradox in its deepest essence."*[10]

There is just one problem with leaving the torso as a testament to the impossibility of expressing the Inexpressible: Schönberg himself did not agree that the opera was finished. There is no question that the heartfelt, despairing cry of Moses at the end of Act II, *"O Wort, du Wort das mir fehlt!"* is Schönberg's own as well. But there is no evidence that by the end of his life he had thrown in the towel. Adorno acknowledged that the *"impossibility which appears intrinsic to the work is, in reality, an impossibility which was not intended. It is well known that great works can be recognized by the gap between their aim and their actual achievement."*[11] As Karl Wörner closely catalogued in the first published book on the opera in 1959, there were at least eight comments in Schönberg's letters up to the last year of his life repeating his intention to complete the work.[12] Wörner closed his own comments on the unfinished third act with the statement, *"The various remarks contained in Schönberg's letters leave no room for doubt that he was firmly resolved to complete the work's composition."*[13] An analysis of the music itself argues for its incompleteness.[14]

Schönberg made a robust effort in spite of serious illness to obtain a grant from the Guggenheim Foundation in January, 1945[15] to give him the freedom from financial pressures, not only to complete the opera, but also to finish *Die Jakobsleiter* – his earlier, Swedenborgian, religio-philosophical choral work. The earlier oratorio text draft of *Moses und Aron* was rounded out with a short third act that, patterned after classical and romantic oratorios, resolved a second act full of turmoil with a triumphal denouement: faith restored. Schönberg wanted the opera version to end the same way. Unpublished compositional fragments

9 Michael Cherlin: *Schönberg's Musical Imagination* (Cambridge etc. 2007), 19; see also Joseph Auner: Schönberg as Moses and Aron, in *Opera Quarterly* 23/4 (2007), 373–384, 382.

10 Etty Mulder: Wort, Bild, Gedanke: Zu Schönbergs Moses und Aron, in *Vom Neuwerden des Alten: Über den Botschaftscharakter des musikalischen Theaters*. Edited by Otto Kolleritsch (Wien 1995), 63–78, 73 (Studien zur Wertungsforschung 29) [my translation].

11 Theodor W. Adorno: Sacred Fragment, see fn. 3, 226.

12 Karl H. Wörner: *Schönberg's 'Moses and Aaron'*, see fn. 2, 90; see also https://www.Schönberg.at/index.php/en/typography-2/moses-und-aron (02.07.2024).

13 Karl H. Wörner: *Schönberg's 'Moses and Aaron'*, see fn. 2, 91.

14 Pamela [Cooper-]White: *Schönberg and the God-Idea*, see fn. 3, 231–233.

15 Arnold Schönberg to Henry Allen Moe, John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, January 22, 1945 (carbon copy; The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Music Division [Arnold Schoenberg Collection] | ASCC 3880). See also Therese Muxeneder: Notes to "Die Jakobsleiter," Wiener Staatsoper, July 3, 2018. Online at https://www.Schönberg.at/index.php/en/typography-2/die-jakobsleiter (07.02.2024).

and notations for Act III, though scant, suggest a similar recapitulation of themes from Acts I and II to accomplish this musically.

Was there anything besides illness and the pressures of daily life – very serious matters in and of themselves – that stood in the way? Schönberg produced very little in his later years, and mostly on commission, so this remains a very real question.[16] If the Guggenheim grant had come through, would Schönberg have been able to produce a finished Act III? We will never know.

I would like to propose one other possibility: that is, that the completion of the opera became impossible in light of antisemitism and the Holocaust, Schönberg's personal memory of the family's precipitous flight from Nazi Germany just as Act II was completed, and the murders of those relatives left behind. Did Schönberg suffer from a resulting form of writer's block, in which a hopeful conclusion to Act III of the opera could no longer be envisioned? Extant text sketches for Act III suggest a grim post-traumatic reaction, and preoccupation with a militant version of Zionism. To understand these factors, we must first examine the vicissitudes of Schönberg's cultural and political identifications over many years.

Schönberg's Judaism and Zionist Vision

For a long time, Schönberg saw his own works standing in a long line of musical and artistic achievement – continuing the creative development of German high culture since Bach,[17] and in a direct German-Austrian lineage from Mozart to Schubert to Brahms and Wagner. He often used them as exemplars in his teaching and writings on composition.[18] Dorothy Lamb Crawford describes it thus:[19]

> His students were stunned by Schoenberg's "improvisations" on a given problem, written at tremendous speed on the blackboard in the style of Beethoven, Haydn, Mozart, or Brahms. The composer Leon Kirchner remembers feeling so awed by this that at first he thought it hopeless to become a composer. The students' exercises were to be done in these styles; Schoenberg never drew on his own music. "One had to master the past, and the forms out of which the present came …"

16 Personal communication, Therese Muxeneder, head archivist at the Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna, May 2019.

17 Mark Berry notes that *"Bach was the only composer chosen for analysis in advanced counterpoint classes." – Arnold Schoenberg* (London 2019), 159 (Critical Lives.)

18 Aíne Heneghan: Musical Migration: Schönberg's Thinking and Teaching in Europe and the U.S., lecture presented at the Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien, May 14, 2019. Heneghan demonstrates how Schönberg focused on Beethoven's piano sonatas in his teaching in Los Angeles based on documentary evidence including unpublished class notes from his students.

19 Dorothy Lamb Crawford: Arnold Schoenberg in Los Angeles, in: *Musical Quarterly* 86/1 (Spring 2002), 6–48, 26. See also Arnold Schönberg: Nationale Musik (1931) (ASSV 5.3.1.87), where Schönberg claims his heritage from Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, and Brahms. Translation published in Arnold Schoenberg: *Style and Idea: Selected Writings. 60th Anniversary Edition*. Edited by Leonard Stein (Berkeley/CA, Los Angeles, London 2010), 172–175.

He drew on these earlier masters, especially Wagner and the later Brahms, in his own compositional process – even after he pursued the 12-tone method.[20] As Schönberg's most recent biographer Mark Berry has put it, *"Schoenberg always insisted that he was a composer, not a twelve-note composer, that what mattered was the 'idea' of the work, not the 'style' in which it was expressed."*[21] As I argued over 35 years ago on the evidence from the musical sketches for *Moses und Aron*, and as more recent research on his prose writings confirms,[22] his work was as much an evolutionary development from the great German masters, as it was revolutionary. He believed (perhaps![23]), or at least hoped for a time, that his work would advance the proven German supremacy of music for another century.[24] On the other hand, as he wrote in 1931,

> German music will not take my path, the path I have pointed out. | Prepared to release myself from it, but not without having settled my debt to it, I wish as thanks to show it the path it has taken. | Until I am near [to it again.] And if by widening the interval until this separation is annulled I have blurred the point at which I have stood, I wish to emphasize that much more clearly the point at which it [German music] stands and will stand, until someone whose guidance it will accept leads it forward.[25]

It is notable that Schönberg did not initially see his admiration for the antisemite Wagner as a contradiction with his Jewish origins, although he struggled to reconcile the increasing rise of antisemitism with his identification with high German culture, as many aspiring young Jews did at the time. Such a view was not uncommon among pan-German Jewish intellectuals in Austria after the fin-de-siècle.[26] He had even convinced himself – for a time – that Wagner gave him a way out , as a "good" or "high-minded Jew" (unlike the supposedly

20 Pamela [Cooper-]White: *Schoenberg and the God-Idea*, see fn. 3, 227–234.

21 Mark Berry: *Arnold Schoenberg*, see fn. 17, 110.

22 E.g., Aíne Heneghan: Musical Migration, see fn. 18; Dorothy Lamb Crawford: Arnold Schoenberg in Los Angeles, see fn. 19.

23 E. Randol Schönberg: The Most Famous Thing He Never Said, in *Arnold Schönberg und sein Gott | and His God. Bericht zum Symposium | Report of the Symposium 26.–29. Juni 2002*. Edited by Christian Meyer (Wien 2003), 27–30 (*Journal of the Arnold Schönberg Center* 5/2003), referring to the statement Schönberg's pupil Josef Rufer reported having heard the composer tell him in 1921: *"I have discovered something which will assure the supremacy* [Vorherrschaft] *of German music for the next hundred years,"* in Josef Rufer: *The Works of Arnold Schoenberg: A Catalogue of His Compositions, Writings and Paintings* (London 1962), 45. E. Randol Schoenberg, grandson of the composer, doubts Rufer's report as anything more than perhaps ironic, concerned by the *"not-so-subtle implication* [...] *that Schoenberg was a fanatical German supremacist, like Hitler, and therefore that his twelve-tone method should be associated with fascism and Nazism and discarded"* (27).

24 Others have provided documentary evidence for Schönberg's passion for continuing the supremacy of German music (even if he never said precisely those "famous words" to Rufer). See Klara Móricz: *Jewish Identities: Nationalism, Racism, and Utopianism in Twentieth Century Music* (Berkeley/CA 2008), 205–206; and Mark Berry: *Arnold Schoenberg*, see fn. 17, 102–104.

25 Arnold Schönberg: Entwürfe zum Vorwort der Kompositionslehre (1931) (ASSV 2.3.5.g), English translation in David Isadore Lieberman: Schoenberg Rewrites His Will. A Survivor from Warsaw, Op. 46, in *Political and Religious Ideas in the Works of Arnold Schoenberg*. Edited by Charlotte Cross and Russell Berman (New York, London 2000), 193–229, 209.

26 Mark Berry: *Arnold Schönberg*, see fn. 17, 104; Klara Móricz notes that the Jewish scholar and philosopher Gershom Scholem even *"coined the term Deutschjudentum to describe it." Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 205.

uneducated Jewish masses), who by attaining artistic transcendence could rise beyond the ghetto and be redeemed from his eastern European Jewish past.[27]

Schönberg as a convert to Protestantism, long imagined that his Protestant conversion – undertaken shortly after the antisemitic mayor Karl Lueger's election and the pogrom in the very street where he lived with his parents as a young man[28] – would protect him. Believing himself to be a cultural German artist, he withstood increasing antisemitic attacks by critics and in the general atmospheres of both Vienna and Berlin, but still believed in the dream of assimilation until he experienced direct racial discrimination in the army during World War I,[29] then a direct threat of violence by a neighbor, and a culminating incident at the Salzburg resort of Mattsee in 1921, when he and his family were evicted as Jews.[30] Unable to produce proof of his conversion to Christianity (quite naturally having left his baptismal certificate at home),[31] Schönberg was expelled, and the peace in which he sought to compose was shattered.[32] In May 1923, he wrote to Kandinsky – no doubt referring back to the Mattsee incident:

> Must not a Kandinsky have an inkling of what really happened when I had to break off my first working summer for 5 years, leave the place I had sought out for peace to work in, and afterwards couldn't regain the peace of mind to work at all? Because the Germans will not put up with the Jews![33].

This last deeply personal, racialized form of antisemitism experienced in Mattsee – although not as unique or new as scholars previously believed – was

27 When we young Austrian Jewish Artists (1935) (ASSV 6.2.5.); speech given to the Mailamm (American Palestine Music Association), New York, March 29, 1935; published in *Style and Idea*, see fn. 19, 502–505. See also Julie Brown: *Schoenberg and Redemption* (Cambridge, UK 2014), 45–46. Brown explores Schönberg's early devotion to Wagner, even Wagner's antisemitic essay *Das Judentum in Musik*, in further detail, 41–49, 122–124.

28 Therese Muxeneder: Arnold Schönbergs Konfrontationen mit Antisemitismus (I), in *Journal of the Arnold Schönberg Center 14/2017*. Edited by Eike Feß and Therese Muxeneder (Wien 2017), 11–32, 18.

29 Cf. Schönberg's allusions in a letter to Peter Gradenwitz, July 20, 1934 (carbon copy; The Library of Congress, see fn. 15 | ASCC 2732), English translation in Moshe Lazar: Arnold Schoenberg and His Doubles, in *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 17/1, 2 (June & November 1994), 8–150, 110; see also letter to Stephen Wise, May 12, 1932 (carbon copy; The Library of Congress, see fn. 15 | ASCC 2688), cited in Therese Muxeneder: Arnold Schönbergs Konfrontationen mit Antisemitismus (I), see fn. 28, 157. Cf., Klara Móricz: *Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 206.

30 Therese Muxeneder: Arnold Schönbergs Konfrontationen mit Antisemitismus (II), in: *Journal of the Arnold Schönberg Center 15/2018*. Edited by Eike Feß and Therese Muxeneder (Wien 2018), 131–162, 146–148 and idem: Arnold Schönbergs Konfrontationen mit Antisemitismus (III), in: *Journal of the Arnold Schönberg Center 16/2019*. Edited by Eike Feß and Therese Muxeneder (Wien 2019), 164–254, 176–199; Arnold Schönberg: When we young Austrian Jewish Artists, see fn. 27, 503. Alexander L. Ringer: Arnold Schoeberg and the Politics of Jewish Survival, in *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute 3/1* (March 1979), 11–40; idem: *Arnold Schoenberg. The Composer as Jew* (New York 1990); Michael Mäckelmann: *Arnold Schönberg und das Judentum: Der Komponist und sein religiöses, nationales und politisches Selbstverständnis nach 1921* (Hamburg 1984), 201–335, 379–397 (Hamburger Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft 28); Moshe Lazar: Arnold Schoenberg and His Doubles, see fn. 29, esp. 11, 15, 50–51; Mark Berry: *Arnold Schoenberg*, see fn. 17, 101–102.

31 Mark Berry: *Arnold Schoenberg*, see fn. 17, 102.

32 Therese Muxeneder: Arnold Schönbergs Konfrontationen mit Antisemitismus (III), see fn. 30; Mark Berry: *Arnold Schoenberg*, see fn. 17, 119–120; See also letter to Kandinsky, May 4, 1923 (carbon copy; The Library of Congress, see fn. 15 | ASCC 832), English translation in *Arnold Schoenberg, Wassily Kandinsky. Letters, Pictures, and Documents*. Edited by Jelena Hahl-Koch (London 1984), 86.

33 Ibidem.

perhaps a final tipping point, which he wrote about several times.[34] I would also suggest that his strong early identification with German music may have been, at least in part, a defensive denial of the increasingly dangerous antisemitic atmosphere, and a reason why the in-breaking of that painful reality at Mattsee was all the more acutely painful and disillusioning: *"Toward the end it got very ugly in Mattsee."*[35]

The wound was re-stimulated two years later when Kandinsky, then teaching at the Bauhaus Weimar, encouraged him to become the director of the Weimar music school. Hearing from Alma Mahler about antisemitic[36] elements in the Bauhaus group, he refused the invitation,[37] writing angrily about the earlier Mattsee experience to Kandinsky:

> For I have at last learnt the lesson that has been forced upon me during this year, and I shall not ever forget it. It is that I am not a German, not a European, indeed perhaps scarcely even a human being (at least, the Europeans prefer the worst of their race to me), but I am a Jew.

He goes on to declare,

> I am content that it should be so! Today I no longer wish to be an exception [...] I have heard that even Kandinsky sees only evil in the actions of the Jews and in their evil actions only the Jewishness, and at this point I give up hope of reaching any understanding. It was a dream. We are two kinds of people. Definitely! So you will realise that I only do whatever is necessary to keep alive.[38]

After receiving a shocked response from Kandinsky, he elaborated on the Mattsee experience, accusing Kandinsky of *"associate*[ing] *with politics that aim at bringing about the possibility of excluding me from my natural sphere of action"* and failing to combat the prevailing antisemitic politics of the day.[39] He ended the letter after a long diatribe against the then common assumption that all Jews were Bolsheviks and Communists, with these foreboding words: "[W]*hat is antisemitism to lead to if not to acts of violence? Is it so difficult to imagine that?*

34 Letters to Alban Berg, July 16, 1921 (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Wien, Musiksammlung [F21.Berg.1321/241] | ASCC 617) and Wassily Kandinsky, April 19 and May 4 (carbon copies; The Library of Congress, see fn. 15 | ASCC 818, 832), English translations published in *A Schoenberg Reader: Documents of a Life*. Edited by Joseph Auner (New Haven 2003), 159, 167–173; Letter to Stephen Wise, May 12, 1934, see fn. 29. See also Klara Móricz: *Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 225; Therese Muxeneder: Konfrontationen mit Antisemitismus (I), see fn. 28, 30, 32.

35 Letter to Alban Berg, July 16, 1921, see fn. 34.

36 Klara Móricz: *Jewish Identities*,see fn. 24, 225. NB: Following Mortimer Ostow, *Myth and Madness: The Psychodynamics of Antisemitism* (New Brunswick, NJ 1996), 14; I have chosen to follow the spelling "antisemitic" rather than the more common "anti-Semitic," in his words, *"indicating my rejection of the racial implications of the term."* (Pamela Cooper-White: *Old and Dirty Gods: Religion, Antisemitism and the Origins of Psychonalysis* [London 2017], 13n)

37 Mark Berry: *Arnold Schoenberg*, see fn. 17, 118–119; Klara Móricz: *Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 225; Bluma Goldstein: Schoenberg's Moses und Aron: A Vanishing Biblical Nation, in *Political and Religious Ideas in the Works of Arnold Schoenberg*, see fn. 25, 159–192, 160.

38 Letter to Kandinsky April 19, 1923 (carbon copy; The Library of Congress, see fn. 15 | ASCC 818), English translation in *Arnold Schoenberg, Wassily Kandinsky*, see fn. 32, 76.

39 Letter to Kandinsky, May 4, 1923 (carbon copy; The Library of Congress, see fn. 15 |ASCC 832), English translation ibidem, 79.

You are perhaps satisfied with depriving Jews of their civil rights. Then certainly Einstein, Mahler, I and many others, will have been got rid of."[40] He goes on to elaborate on Jewish survival in the face of persecution:

> But one thing is certain: they will not be able to exterminate those much tougher elements thanks to whose endurance Jewry has maintained itself unaided against the whole of mankind for 20 centuries. For these are evidently so constituted that they can accomplish the task that their God has imposed on them: To survive in exile, uncorrupted and unbroken, until the hour of salvation comes![41]

This now well-known exchange of letters with Kandinsky in 1923 shows the shock to Schönberg's system that his eviction from a "genteel" (Gentile) spa caused – but moreover, his awakening to the reality that he would never truly belong to Austro-German high society irrespective of manners, resources, education, or even conversion to Christianity[42]: *"Today I no longer wish to be an exception."*[43]

As Therese Muxeneder has definitely shown in her exhaustive study of archival materials, the Mattsee incident was by no means an isolated experience of antisemitism, or even the first he personally encountered.[44] How could it be, given the total context of a rising antisemitism throughout Austria and Germany in the first decades of the 20th century? Antisemitism was a "total context" in which all Jews conducted their lives.[45] Beginning with discrimination during his school days in the predominantly immigrant Jewish district of Leopoldstadt, and a pogrom that occurred in 1897 on the very street where he and his family lived when he was still in his 20's (to punish Leopoldstadt's electoral refusal to support the right-wing Christian socialist party led by the antisemitic mayor-elect Karl Lueger), Schönberg was aware of the increasing cultural and political shift from a long familiar religious and culturally-based animosity, which educated Jews imagined they could overcome through assimilation, to an antisemitism based on a pseudo-scientific globalized racial discrimination.[46]

40 Ibidem, 81–82. See also Bluma Goldstein: *Reinscribing Moses*, see fn. 3, 138–142.

41 Ibidem, 82.

42 For more on Schönberg's conversion in his 20's to Protestantism (rather than the dominant Catholicism of Vienna), see Pamela [Cooper-]White: *Schoenberg and the God-Idea*, see fn. 3, 53–55; Julie Brown: *Schoenberg and Redemption*, see fn. 27, 41–42, 84–85; Bluma Goldstein: *Reinscribing Moses*, see fn. 3, 137–138.

43 Letter to Kandinsky, April 19, 1923, see fn. 38, 76; see Julie Brown: *Schoenberg and Redemption*, see fn. 27, 89.

44 Cf., Klara Móricz: *Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 225. Lazar offers a strong argument with some documentation re: antisemitism that Schönberg would have encountered in both Vienna and Berlin in Arnold Schoenberg and His Doubles, see fn. 29, 48–51, although he also notes that *"for some two decades (1898–1921)* [Schoenberg] *had ignored if not repressed the messages conveyed from the surrounding political and social reality* [...]" (54).

45 Pamela Cooper-White: *Old and Dirty Gods*, see fn. 36. "Total context" is a term from sociolinguistics and anthropology, as the encompassing surround of a culture, its practices and language(s).

46 E.g., Therese Muxeneder: Arnold Schönbergs Konfrontationen mit Antisemitismus (I), see fn. 28, 21– 25; Julie Brown: *Schoenberg and Redemption*, see fn. 27, 90–91; for a helpful discussions of the shift from cultural to racial antisemitism in Schönberg's context, see, e.g., Steven Beller: *Vienna and the Jews 1867–1938: A Cultural History* (Cambridge, UK 1989), and idem: *Antisemitism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, UK ²2015); see also David Nirenberg: *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York 2013); Robert S. Wistrich: *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred* (New York 1991) and idem: *A Lethal Obsession: Antisemitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York 2010).

Schönberg, his siblings, and many cousins converted to Protestantism in 1898, almost one year to the day after the Christian social mob marched through their neighborhood, destroying Jewish property and inflicting violence on men, women, and children alike.[47] His second move to Berlin in 1911 was to flee antisemitic epithets and death threats by a neighbor living in the same house.[48]

After leaving Berlin and signing up for a year's voluntary military service as a titular private first class,[49] Schönberg wrote to Peter Gradenwitz that as early as 1917

> [he] became aware of the shipwreck of assimilationist aspirations. Having volunteered for the [Austrian] army, with the ardent desire to prove myself at the front, for the first time I felt myself definitely rejected, as I was forced to discover that this was conducted at least as much against the internal foes as against the external ones; and that we, as Jews, were included among these internal foes, no matter what our political positions might have been. [...] It became clear to me, after this experience, that we Jews must rely upon ourselves and that soon we all would have to experience such things.[50] [emphasis added]

Having rejected his earlier Austrian patriotism (another effort to prove himself as a true pan-German citizen), he eventually arrived at his own idiosyncratic, militant version of the Zionist cause. In the same letter, he continued:

> My thinking, building upon this recognition [of antisemitism], guided me to my drama "The Biblical Way," [...] in which I advocated – based upon the possibility indicated in the Bible – the establishment of an independent Jewish state, without staking out in it a position for or against Zionism. Since then Zionist aspirations have also become sacred for me, even though I cannot, for tactical and strategic reasons, fully adhere to them.[51]

He was already beginning to foresee – much earlier than many of his Jewish contemporaries – a level of antisemitic violence that many Jews were still finding unthinkable at the time. In 1938 he wrote, *"Every keen and realistic observer should have known this beforehand, as I knew it almost twenty years ago ...* [E]*very Jew should have known at least that the fate of the Austrian and Hungarian Jews was sealed years ago."*[52] [emphasis added]

47 Therese Muxeneder: Arnold Schönbergs Konfrontationen mit Antisemitismus (I), see fn. 28, 23.

48 Therese Muxeneder: Arnold Schönbergs Konfrontationen mit Antisemitismus (II), see fn. 30, 146.

49 Ibidem, 154.

50 Letter to Peter Gradenwitz, July 20, 1934, see fn. 29; see also letter to Stephen Wise, May 12, 1932, see fn. 29, cited in ibidem, see fn. 28, 157. Cf., Klara Móricz: *Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 206.

51 Moshe Lazar: Arnold Schoenberg and His Doubles, see fn. 29, 110.

52 Arnold Schönberg: A Four Point Program for Jewry (1938) (ASSV 6.1.28.), published in *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 3/1 (March 1979), 49–67, 49.

Schönberg's Zionism

In March, 1924, while living in Mödling, Schönberg was approached by a neighbor Rudolf Seiden to contribute to a pamphlet *Pro Zion!*[53] Schönberg produced a brief essay entitled "Stellung zum Zionismus" [Position on Zionism]. This was his first published pro-Zionist piece, in which he showed himself from the beginning to have adopted a more militant approach than many of his contemporaries.[54] Zionism, then, was clearly on his mind, no doubt heightened by the upcoming Fourteenth Zionist Congress to be held in Vienna in 1925. Although the first extant sketches for his Zionist play *Der biblische Weg* [The Biblical Way] date from 1926 (more about the play will follow), Schönberg noted in letters to both Berg and Max Reinhardt that he had begun thinking about the play as early as 1922–1923,[55] and that he had been thinking for *"fourteen years"*[56] about devoting himself entirely to *"working for the survival of our nation."*

Yet in the 1920's, in spite of his assertions to the contrary in his letters to Berg in 1923, he was still in a transitional space culturally and religiously. Seiden invited him to write for *Pro Zion!*, choosing to overlook his Jewish ethnicity in favor of his inclusion as a German-identified artist and intellectual who had left the Jewish religion.[57] He married his second wife Gertrud Kolisch in the local Protestant Church a few months later. His first version of "Notes for an Autobiography" in 1924 is outlined as follows: *"How I became a Musician* [...] *a Christian* [...] *a Brahmsian* [...] *a Wagnerian* [...]."[58] Only much later in 1944 was this revised to read *"a Musician* [...] *a Christian* [...] *a Jew again* [...] [and reversing the order here:] *a Wagnerian* [...] *a Brahmsian*."[59]

Schönberg's move to Berlin in January, 1925, may have been the last tipping point, and the impetus for beginning his work on *Der biblische Weg* in earnest. Although his appointment to the Preußische Akademie was the

53 March 8, 1924 (printed letter; The Library of Congress, see fn. 15 |ASCC 21134).

54 This brief text from Seiden's pamphlet *Pro Zion! Vornehmlich nichtjüdische Stimmen über die jüdische Renaissancebewegung*. Edited by Rudolf Seiden. Wien 1924 (Judentum und Volk und Land 39), 33, is provided in English translation in Klara Móricz: *Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 227; see also Moshe Lazar: Arnold Schoenberg and His Doubles, see fn. 29, 53–54; Julie Brown: *Schoenberg and Redemption*, see fn. 27, 82–83.

55 Letter to Berg from Paris, October 16, 1933 (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, see fn. 34 [F21.Berg.1321/355] | ASCC 2462), English translation published in Arnold Schoenberg: *Letters*. Edited by Erwin Stein (New York 1965), 184; and letter to Max Reinhardt, May 24, 1933 (Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien [T15.10] | ASCC 7553); partially translated by Moshe Lazar: Arnold Schoenberg and His Doubles, see fn. 29, 95–96, both cited ibidem, 56, 135n.

56 An allusion to Hitler's claim of fourteen years of struggle, as noted in Alexander L. Ringer: *Arnold Schoenberg. The Composer as Jew* (New York 1990), 133; Klara Móricz: *Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 224.

57 Rudolf Seiden: *Pro Zion!*, see fn. 54; English translation in Móricz: *Jewish Identities*, 226.

58 Lebensgeschichte in Begegnungen (1924) (ASSV 5.3.8.9.) and [Lebensgeschichte in Begegnungen] (~1944) (ASSV 5.4.); English translation in *A Schoenberg Reader: Documents of a Life*. Edited by Joseph Auner (New Haven 2003), 8.

59 Ibidem. The significance of this revision is discussed at length in Julie Brown: *Schoenberg and Redemption*, see fn. 27, 95.

most prestigious and remunerative of his career to that point, it was met with Gentile colleagues' antisemitic protests from the very beginning.[60] This may have been reflected musically, as Berry suggests, in the return to a foreboding, expressionistic style in his 12-tone *Begleitungsmusik für einer Lichtspielscene* [Accompaniment to a Cinematographic Scene], op. 34, with its sections *"Threatening Danger," "Fear,"* and *"Catastrophe."*[61] It may even have been the opposition he received upon the move *to* Berlin, and not his departure from that city, that sealed his determination to reclaim his Jewish identity.

It was at this time that Schönberg put the full force of his creativity behind his militant Zionism, and thus his identification with the Jews as the Chosen People – declaring a spiritual mission to be protected by any means necessary – believing that the Jews were naïve to think they could survive through diplomatic negotiations. By the time of his highly performative re-entry into the Jewish religious covenant in Paris in July, 1933, with Marc Chagall as his witness,[62] he had already reclaimed his Jewish identity, and was soon ready in all seriousness to sacrifice his musical career – whatever others in Zionist circles at the time may have thought of the idea – offering himself as the leader in the service of Zionist movement unified by an uncompromising totalitarian authority.[63]

Over the spring and summer of 1933, while still in Paris, he wrote letters to his militant Zionist acquaintance Jakob Klatzkin (1882–1948), describing in some detail a united movement of *"all Jewish parties"* in the interests of creating a new Jewish nation. In it, he disavowed *"all Western acquisitions; we are Asians and nothing essential binds us to the West. We have our* [biblical] *promise, and no other temptation can more honor us!"*[64] Based on a study of Schönberg's correspondence and library, it seems that his militant Zionist views, although similar to those of Ze'ev (Vladimir) Jabotinsky,[65] were more directly influenced by the lesser known Klatzkin, with whom Schönberg began communicating in late 1931,[66] and whose books, *In Praise of Wisdom*, *Die Judenfrage der Gegenwart*,

60 Mark Berry: *Arnold Schoenberg*, see fn. 17, 132–33.

61 Ibidem, 141–143.

62 Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien (T82.08 | ASCI D4899).

63 See Julie Brown: *Schoenberg and Redemption*, see fn. 27, 83–85; Moshe Lazar: Arnold Schoenberg and His Doubles, see fn. 29, 94–96, 105–114; Klara Móricz: *Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 201–335.

64 Letter to Jakob Klatzkin, June 13, 1933 (Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien [T57.05] | ASCC 7086), English translation in Moshe Lazar: Arnold Schoenberg and His Doubles, see fn. 29, 96, 105.

65 Alexander Ringer makes this analogy in *Arnold Schoenberg*, see fn. 56, 60; see also Salome Schöll: "Der Biblische Weg" und der Zionismus in den 1920er Jahren. Schönbergs Nachbarschaft zum Revisionismus, in: *Arnold Schönberg und sein Gott | and His God. Bericht zum Symposium | Report of the Symposium 26.–29. Juni 2002*. Edited by Christian Meyer (Wien 2003), 239–246 (*Journal of the Arnold Schönberg Center* 5/2003); Klara Móricz points out that Schönberg never cites Jabotinsky and ascribes Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy as Schönberg's models, *Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 214. Therese Muxeneder pointed me to the closer influence of Jakob Klatzkin.

66 Schönberg's first letter to Jakob Klatzkin goes back to June 13, 1931 (carbon copy; The Library of Congress, see fn. 15 | ASCC 2069) after reading an unpublished article by Klatzkin for the *Encyclopedia Judaica*; cited in ; Klara Móricz: *Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 382n32.

and *Problem des modernen Judentums*, Klatzkin sent to Schönberg with dedications.[67]

He sent similar sentiments to Ernst Toch whose wife Lily recalled the two having vigorous debates about Zionist strategy.[68] Schönberg wrote out a "Programm zur Hilfe und Aufbau der Partei"[69] for a gathering in Paris that ended up causing Schönberg to sever ties with the Tochs because of their preference for diplomacy over militancy. In a letter to stage director Max Reinhardt, May 24, 1933, Schönberg prevailed upon Reinhardt to produce *Der biblische Weg* and alluded to a still secret plan he had already set in motion with *"many"* others for a united, authoritarian Zionist movement and propaganda campaign, for which the play would serve as an inaugural event. In this letter he makes the astonishing claim for the first time: *"It is I who leads* [sic] *this movement."*[70] He repeated this proposal in an essay on the "Jewish Question" (*"Judenfrage"*) in 1933: that based on his having established a *"dictatorship* [...] *if only in a Music Association,"* who *"forced the world to believe in what I believe!"* he should become the leader of a new Jewish political movement.[71] To Anton Webern, he wrote the following August,

> For fourteen years I have been prepared for what now has happened [...] and have finally cut myself off for good – even though with difficulty, and a good deal of vacillation – from all that tied me to the Occident. I have long since been resolved to be a Jew, and you will also have sometimes heard me talk about a play (The Biblical Way); I could not say more about it at that time, but in it I have shown the ways in which a national Zionism can become active. And now, as of a week ago, I have also returned officially to the Jewish religious community [...][72]

Upon his arrival in the U.S., Schönberg continued writing about his desire to separate himself entirely from Western, European culture. In an essay "Jeder Junge Jude" [Every Young Jew][73] he described the shame and persecution

67 All books in Arnold Schönberg's personal Library (Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien [BOOK K28, K29, K30]). While Klatzkin disagreed with the idea of the Jews as the Chosen People, he passionately advocated for a nationalist Jewish state. Like Schönberg, his philosophy embraced the idea of a *"tragic rift between the living, original, unmediated soul (Seele), and the spirit (Geist), expressed by reason and its principle product – culture. This rift, he maintained, caused human beings to live in constant alienation from the world instead of being in it* [...]" (Eran Rolnik: *Freud in Zion: Psychoanalysis and the Making of Modern Jewish Identity* [London 2012], 24.) Interestingly, too, Klatzkin believed progress in human reason would result in moving *"ever closer to its origin, 'the divine spirit of nothingness,'"* which eventually *"controls the human soul, to the extent of destroying the human and biological world, cooling human life and killing it with a 'kiss of nothingness.'"* (ibidem, 25) There are interesting parallels to Klatzkin's "Gnostic Zionism" and Schönberg's notion of salvation in the wilderness, in union with an unrepresentable God.

68 Lilly Toch: *The Orchestration of a Composer's Life* (Los Angeles 1978), vol. 1, 318–319; cited in Klara Móricz: *Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 215.

69 Arnold Schönberg: Pläne zur Einwanderung (1933) (ASSV 6.1.4.); cited ibidem, 216, 384n73.

70 See fn. 55.

71 Arnold Schönberg: Judenfrage (Arcachon) (1933) (ASSV 6.1.5.); English translation in Klara Móricz: *Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 210; see also Julie Brown: *Schoenberg and Redemption*, see fn. 27, 161.

72 Schönberg to Webern, August 4, 1933 (carbon copy; The Library of Congress, see fn. 15 | ASCC 2398); English version published in Moshe Lazar: Arnold Schoenberg and His Doubles, see fn. 29, 106; regarding the meaning of "fourteen years," see fn. 56.

73 Jewish United Party / Parti Unique des Juifs / Jüdische Einheitspartei (1934) (ASSV 6.1.25.), subchapter "Jeder junge Jude";

experienced by European Jews as they attempted to assimilate into a German Christian culture:

> Yes, all achievements must be reversed! [...] We do not want any civil rights, which only provide the totally superfluous proof that they are not ours to have [...] We do not wish to have a part in Western culture, through which we lose the entirety of our innate instincts. We will gain insight into ourselves by excluding ourselves from it [...] We no longer want their knowledge, their arts, their manners, their customs; we want to free ourselves from them and, like the fox – isn't he clever – who tears out his leg if he has been caught in a trap, we want to have everything torn out which they want to retain – if only we can become free of them![74]

Schönberg continued writing to a variety of acquaintances and public Zionist figures during this early period in America, describing his own Zionist plans and sharing his fervor for a united – totalitarian – Jewish state.[75] In a letter to a prominent activist Rabbi Stephen Wise, he repeated his offer to give up music entirely and devote himself to the founding of a Jewish state, again offering himself as a leader convinced of both authoritarianism and militancy.[76]

A month earlier, Schönberg presented his first speech in English at a reception of the Mailamm musical society in New York[77] which was organized to welcome him to the United States. Schönberg startled the audience, who no doubt were expecting a speech about music, by delivering a political diatribe. He proclaimed,

> It is not worthy to fight against the hostility, but it is only honorable to annihilate the enemy [...] A proud people like the Jews has the obligation to look danger resolutely in the face [...] There is only one enemy which must be annihilated, annihilated at any price.[78] [...] it is necessary to unify the Jewish people in the same manner in which other peoples have unified themselves: with power, with force, and, if needed, with violence against all those who oppose themselves to this unifying.[79]

Perhaps chastened by a shocked and negative response to his militant politics, Schönberg returned to Mailamm almost a year later in March, 1935, with a more circumspect speech in which he acknowledged the influence of Wagner,

first published, in German, in the *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 17/1, 2 (June & November 1994), 451–455. First English translation by Julie Brown: *Schoenberg and Redemption*, see fn. 27, 196–201. Brown discusses this essay at length in ibidem, 79–87.

74 Ibidem, 200–201.

75 Many of these are detailed in E. Randol Schoenberg: Arnold Schoenberg and Albert Einstein: Their Relationship and Views on Zionism, in *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 10/2 (November 1987), 134–187.

76 Letter to Stephen Wise, May 12, 1934, see fn. 29; first published in E. Randol Schoenberg: Arnold Schoenberg and Albert Einstein, see fn. 75, 165–168. Klara Móricz also cites this letter as further evidence of Schönberg's proto-fascist leanings, in *Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 209–210.

77 "Mailamm" was an acronym for the Society's name in Hebrew, renamed the Jewish Music Forum in 1939. (Sabine Feisst: *Schoenberg's New World: The American Years* [Oxford 2017], 283n, 316–317.) The speech Jewish Situation (1934) (ASSV 6.2.2.), given April 29, 1934, is published in *A Schoenberg Reader*, see fn. 34, 251–256.

78 Ibidem, 254.

79 Ibidem, 255. See also commentary by Julie Brown: *Schoenberg and Redemption*, see fn. 27, 102–104.

and his former aspirations as a contributor to high German art as the way *"Out of the Ghetto!"* [80] His topic was still the struggle of a Jewish artist, but now focused on the failed project of assimilation and the reclaiming of *"Jewish self-confidence, to restore faith in ourselves, the belief in our creative capacity, the belief in our high morality, in our destiny. We should never forget that we are God's elected people."* [81] This speech is considerably toned down from the autobiographical essay of 1934, but it still reflects the conviction made explicit in both *Der biblische Weg* and in *Moses und Aron* that the Jewish people would only become lost and corrupted by foreign influences, and they needed to withdraw into a wilderness of purification toward a separatist Promised Land, a "New Palestine."

Schönberg's period of Zionist fervor in the 1930s was scarcely addressed by a first generation of critics and musicologists after his death. Until fairly recently, many of his most zealous writings on this theme either remained unpublished, or were overlooked as irrelevant to what mattered most – his musical composition. At most, it was being discussed in the literature as a precursor to Schönberg's oratorio version of *Moses und Aron*, and to his gradual return to Judaism. The first two major biographies, by H. H. Stuckenschmidt and Willi Reich, briefly noted his strong interest in Zionism in the 1930s, and even his willingness to give up music for the sake of the cause,[82] but neither elaborated on the content of his writings on Zionism in the (unpublished) documentary evidence.

Was Schönberg's aggressive brand of Zionism being covered up by the first generation of Schönberg scholars out of embarrassment because of its apparent extremism, or even worrisome signs of megalomania? I do not believe so – at least not consciously. In general, the composer's cultural context was

80 Arnold Schönberg: When we young Austrian Jewish Artists, see fn. 27, 503.

81 Ibidem, 504.

82 E.g., Willi Reich: *Schönberg*, see fn. 6; Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt: *Schoenberg. His Life, World and Work* (New York 1978); Karl H. Wörner: *Schoenberg's 'Moses and Aaron'*, see fn. 2, 25. The term "Zionism" does not appear in either biographer's index. Stuckenschmidt writes, *"Schoenberg had said that he did not agree with many details of Zionism. But he was a passionate fighter for the idea of giving the Jewish people a homeland."* (313) He also alludes to a *"long, important letter"* to Kandinsky dated May 4, 1923, see fn. 32. It *"shows an astonishing insight into the political and ideological situation of the period* [...] *The letter* [...] *is one of Schoenberg's most important pronouncements and puts forward his political position quite clearly. He was equally hostile to communism and to American super-capitalism."* (290) Stuckenschmidt mentions only that Jewish questions were discussed in the drama *The Biblical Way* and quotes the letter to Kandinsky again referring only to Jewish persecution: *"But what is antisemitism to lead to if not to acts of violence? Is it so difficult to imagine that?"* (368) He summarizes Schönberg's political view by the end of his life as *"social capitalism"* (473), citing the essay My attitude towards Politics (1950) (ASSV 5.3.6.20.) (551–552) (*Style and Idea*, see fn. 19, 505–506). Reich quotes a letter to Webern, August 4, 1933, see fn. 72, in which Schönberg mentions *Der biblische Weg* as his exemplar of *"the ways in which a national Zionism can become active."* He notes his return to the Jewish community the week before, and states *"It is my intention to take an active part in endeavours of this kind. I regard that as more important than my art, and am determined – if I am suited to such activities – to do nothing in future but work for the Jewish national cause. I have begun already, and almost everyone I have approached in Paris has agreed with my idea. My immediate plan is for a long tour of America, which could perhaps turn into a world tour, to persuade people to help the Jews in Germany. I have been promised powerful support."* (189) He anticipates having *"to speak at large gatherings (loud-speakers) and over the radio. That is why I do not yet know how much time I shall be able to spend working here, nor whether I shall be able to complete Moses and Aaron, or to revise my drama The Biblical Way."* (190)

not the focus of study then that it has more recently become, although the tragedy of the Holocaust was not ignored. A complete musical analysis of Schönberg's works, begun in the 1960's with the critical edition (*Sämtliche Werke*), is only now nearing completion.[83]

In 1982 when I was first studying *Moses und Aron* as a doctoral student, and working my way through all the then-available sketches in Los Angeles and New York,[84] there was no previous published work bringing together an analysis of Schönberg's biography, the philosophical and theological foundations of the libretto, or a thorough 12-tone row analysis of the music. This research, published in 1985,[85] was the first source-critical analysis of both the text and the music of the opera. My view of Schönberg's "evolutionary as well as revolutionary" 12-tone compositional method, following Wagner's leitmotivic structure[86] and laying harmonies under melodic themes just as classical and romantic composers had done, was considered by senior colleagues at the time to be a somewhat "revisionist" – even reactionary point of view.[87] The general approach to Schönberg's works at the time was more theoretical,[88] with a focus on the method of serial composition and its subsequent developments by later composers. My view that we should take Schönberg at his word that the opera was unfinished, contrary to the view of some famous critics and philosophers (who was I in my twenties to contest the great philosopher Theodor Adorno!?) was taken seriously,[89] but not widely shared.

Schönberg's Zionism has only been addressed in more detail by critics and musicologists since the mid-1990s.[90] As Klara Móricz wrote in 2008, "*The*

83 See https://www.Schönberg-gesamtausgabe.de/informationen.html (08.02.2024).

84 At the Arnold Schönberg Institute, then housed at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles; and at the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York. For a fascinating discussion of the move of the Schönberg archives from Los Angeles to Vienna, Austria, see Therese Muxeneder: Ethik des Bewahrens. Exil und Rückkehr des Schönberg-Nachlasses, in *Kulturelle Räume und ästhetische Universalität. Musik und Musiker im Exil*. Edited by Claus-Dieter Krohn etc. (München 2008), 44–66, online version https://www.Schönberg.at/images/stories/bilder_statische_artikel/archiv/ethikbewahrens.pdf (08.02.2024) .

85 Pamela [Cooper-]White: *Schoenberg and the God-Idea*, see fn. 3.

86 My own observations on Leitmotive were based on melodic themes and other recurring thematic material (related to specific row forms, orchestration, etc.) (ibidem, Appendix 2, 247–256.) More recently, others have analyzed leitmotivic patterns in certain tone-row partitions *per se*: Christian Martin Schmidt: *Schönbergs Oper Moses und Aron: Analyse der diastematischen, formalen, und musikdramatischen Komposition* (Mainz 1988), esp. 59–83, 96–111, and 112–124; Michael Cherlin: *Schoenberg's Musical Imagination*, see fn. 9, 86, 230–298; and Jack Boss: Interval Symmetries as Divine Perfection in Schoenberg's Moses und Aron, in *Konturen* 5 (2014), 31–58. Aine Heneghan: Musical Migration, see fn. 18, also argues how his process of re-thinking in English led to new conceptualizing, including strategies to show motives within all embellishments, as described in Schönberg's posthumous volume *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, edited by his then Teaching Fellow and Research Assistant at UCLA, Gerald Strang.

87 Joseph Kerman, personal communication, University of California at Berkeley, 1983; cf. idem: *Contemplating Music* (Cambridge 1985).

88 E.g., see Allan Forte: *The Structure of Atonal Music* (New Haven 1973) and George Perle: *Serial Composition and Atonality: An Introduction to the Music of Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern* (Berkeley 1962).

89 E.g., Michael Steinberg: Beyond Words. Program Notes to Moses und Aron, Metropolitan Opera, Stagebill 1999, 7–28.

90 Notably, in Moshe Lazar: Arnold Schoenberg and His Doubles, see fn. 29, esp. 48–54, and 94–114; and very recently in Sabine Feisst: *Schoenberg's New World*, see fn. 77, 85–90.

affinity of Schönberg's political views to fascism is one of the most uncomfortable issues in Schönberg scholarship." [91] More generously, Julie Brown wrote in 2014,

> The late re-emergence of ideas previously explored in a different way, and later actions that seem out of character, provide pointers back to the less concretely documented earlier period. Some of this may run counter to established narratives about Schönberg, which have been formed on the basis of select published archival materials. It can be very difficult to understand and even approach questions of anti-Semitism in the period before the Second World War. While it is easy to accept the idea that an enormous gap separates us from cultures two and three centuries ago, photos and living witnesses contribute to a greater feeling of proximity when it comes to the history of the early twentieth century. However, even if it feels familiar, European cultural history of the last one hundred years is so inescapably linked with the catastrophe of the Holocaust that we are arguably as alienated from pre-war European experiences as from earlier centuries, especially with regard to political and ideological matters. The Holocaust was [...] a catastrophe for Western intellectual and cultural life [...] In the case of Schönberg studies, Hartmut Zelinsky's shrill readings of the link between Schönberg and Wagnerism stand perhaps at one end, Alexander Ringer's idealized portrait of Schönberg as a Jewish composer at the other.[92] Particular motivations may also inflect some of the post-war Schönbergian documents that survive, and doubtless the testimony of some living witnesses to his life.[93]

Brown discusses how the gaps and omissions in earlier Schönberg studies resulted from a *"shattering of meaning"* in light of the impact of the Holocaust (28), at least for a generation, compounded by the ways in which racialized anti-Judaism occluded certain lines of inquiry even during Schönberg's own lifetime.[94] And although the evidence of trauma was right under our noses in the unpublished Act III sketches for *Moses und Aron*, the significance of Schönberg's darkening vision from revision to revision has gone unremarked before now.[95]

91 Klara Móricz: *Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 214.

92 Citing Harmut Zelinsky: Der "Weg" der "Blauen Reiter": Zu Schönbergs Widmung an Kandinsky in die "Harmonielehre," in Arnold Schönberg und Wassily Kandinsky: *Briefe, Bilder und Dokumente einer außergewöhnlichen Begegnung*. Edited by Jelena Hahl-Koch (Salzburg, Wien 1980), 222–270; and Arnold Schönberg – der Wagner Gottes. Anmerkung zum Lebensweg eines deutschen Juden aus Wien, in *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 4 (1986), 7–19; Alexander Ringer: *Arnold Schoenberg*, see fn. 56.

93 Julie Brown: *Schoenberg and Redemption*, see fn. 27, 26–27.

94 Ibidem, 26–32.

95 My name is inscribed in the archival folders for these documents from over 30 years ago, but neither I nor any of my advisors thought to ask what the progression of the various versions of Act III might have meant to Schönberg culturally or psychologically. Bluma Goldstein, although she examines Act III within the context of the entire libretto, noting Aron's distortion of his mission and the strange silence of the people, only uses the published version as her source. (Schoenberg's Moses und Aron, see fn. 37, 181–184)

Der biblische Weg

What did *not* go entirely unremarked by scholars was that Schönberg's Zionist political play, or *"Tendenzstück"* ("propaganda piece") as Schönberg called it, was conceived in the same years as *Moses und Aron*. The play depicts a nascent Zionist state of the future, temporarily set up in "Ammongaea," somewhere near Mount Nebo where Moses himself viewed the Promised Land before his death.[96] As in *Moses und Aron*, the action takes place during an interim formative time in anticipation of establishing the Promised Land.[97] It is a totalitarian state, wholly self-contained under the protection of a weapon of mass destruction called "The Trumpets of Jericho." *Der biblische Weg* represents not just a futuristic fantasy, but an actual model Schönberg had in mind for a militant Jewish state, with its principles spelled out over a decade later in his "Four-Point Program for Jewry."[98]

Earlier Schönberg scholars often mentioned this play, but briefly, as a kind of companion work to *Moses und Aron.*[99] Michael Mäckelmann and Bluma Goldstein, in 1984 and 1992 respectively, discussed the play at some length in connection with a wider focus on Schönberg's religious and political commitments.[100] But there was no full-length study of the play until 1994 with the publication of a dedicated volume of the *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute*, which included the first English translation[101] and a detailed study of the play and its sources[102], as well as a catalog of extant sources[103] and related materials.

96 Moshe Lazar speculates that this temporary *"area of deployment"* represents a *"a station in the 'wilderness experience,'"* and not Herzl's original Uganda plan, nor yet a settlement in Palestine – Arnold Schoenberg and His Doubles, see fn. 29, 85–86; see also 37n153, 154. Goldstein (Schoenberg's Moses und Aron) discusses the influence of Herzl's Uganda plan on the composer in his *Moses und Aron*, see fn. 37, 161 and in *Reinscribing Moses*, see fn. 3, 146–149. Schönberg ascribed the failure of this plan to soft and humanitarian mentality; On Jewish Affairs (~1937) (ASSV 6.2.6.); see *Reinscribing Moses*, 148.

97 Moshe Lazar: Arnold Schoenberg and His Doubles, see fn. 29, 85.

98 Arnold Schönberg: A Four Point Program for Jewry, see fn. 52.

99 E.g., Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt: *Schoenberg*, see fn. 82, 368, 513. Mark Berry agrees: *"The play is generally considered simply as an agitprop milestone on the path towards his biblical opera Moses und Aron, its directly contemporary concerns later subsumed into a greater theological understanding. It depends, though, on what one is looking for."* (*Arnold Schoenberg*, see fn. 17, 132– 133).

100 Michael Mäckelmann: *Arnold Schönberg und das Judentum*, see fn. 30, 70–138; Bluma Goldstein: *Reinscribing Moses*, see fn. 3, 141–149.

101 Arnold Schönberg: Der biblische Weg. Schauspiel in drei Akten | Arnold Schoenberg: The Biblical Way. A Play in Three Acts. Translated from the German by Moshe Lazar, in *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 17/1–2 (June & November 1994), 162–329. An Italian translation appeared much earlier in Arnold Schönberg: *Testi poetici e drammatici: editi e inedita*. Edited by Luigi Rognoni, translated by Emilio Castellani (Milano 1967). Willi Reich urged its publication in 1968, believing it was relevant to then-current events in the middle east, but this did not happen (Willi Reich: *Schönberg*, see fn. 7, 158–159).

102 Moshe Lazar: Arnold Schoenberg and His Doubles, see fn. 29.

103 R. Wayne Shoaf: Der biblische Weg: Principal and Related Sources, in *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 17/1–2 (June & November 1994), 151–161.

Play and Opera

While it has long been known that Schönberg conceived of both works during the same years – possibly as early as 1923[104] – there is documentary evidence that the two works were even more closely related than has previously been observed. Unpublished notes for a second draft of *Der biblische Weg* are titled in Schönberg's handwriting *"Notes to Moses und Aron* [i.e., *Der biblische Weg*]."[105] As already noted, the name of the main character in *Der biblische Weg*, "Max Aruns," is a composite of the names "Moses" and "Aaron." (Some have speculated that Schönberg took the second "a" out of the name "Aron" for superstitious reasons – to avoid the title of the opera having 13 letters.[106] The spelling "Aron" dates from this earliest stage of development of the opera text.)

Moreover, the common genesis of the two works is demonstrated by two shared key themes. First is Schönberg's unflagging belief in the unrepresentability of God, as an eternal and almighty but inexpressible Idea. The unforgettable phrase that Moses intones at the very beginning of the opera, *"Einziger, ewiger, allgegenwärtiger, unsichtbarer und unvorstellbarer Gott!"* ["One, eternal, omnipresent, invisible, and unrepresentable God!"] also appears nearly word for word in a stage direction at the very end of the first draft of *Der biblische Weg*, dated June 17–18, 1927. There Schönberg describes the death of Max Aruns: *"Der Gedanke ist gedacht; der Denker tot, aber der Gedanke lebt* [...] [der Gedanke] *des unsichtbaren, unvorstellbaren, einzigen, unteilbaren, allmächtigen ewigen Gottes, den kein anderes Volk denken kann, als das jüdische."* ["The Idea/thought is thought; the thinker dead, but the Idea lives. The Idea of the invisible, unrepresentable, one, indivisible, almighty eternal God, of whom no other people can think except the Jews."][107]

The germ of this Idea of an unrepresentable God was present even earlier, in the 1925 *Four Pieces for Mixed Chorus*, Op. 27, No. 2, "Thou Shalt Not ... Thou Must," based on the second Commandment to make no graven images of the divine (*das Bilderverbot*):

104 Moshe Lazar: Arnold Schönberg and His Doubles, see fn. 29, 56.

105 Der biblische Weg (1926–1927) (ASSV 1.2.1.2., Source C); Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien (T13.04); see R. Wayne Shoaf: Der biblische Weg, see fn. 103, 156.

106 Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt: *Schoenberg*, see fn. 82, 409.

107 Der biblische Weg (1926–1927) (ASSV 1.2.1.2., source C, Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien [T10.01]); facsimile and transcription: First Draft (General Outline). Transcribed by Anne Schönberg, in *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 17/1–2 (June & November 1994), 332–365, 365, with my translation.

Du sollst dir kein Bild
machen!
Denn ein Bild schränkt ein,
begrenzt, fasst, was unbegrenzt
und unvorstellbar bleiben soll.

Ein Bild will Namen haben:
Du kannst ihn nur
vom Kleinen nehmen;
Du sollst das Kleine nicht verehren!

Du musst an den Geist glauben!
Unmittelbar, gefühllos
und selbstlos.
Du musst, Auserwählter, musst,
willst du's bleiben!

Thou shalt not make for thyself
any image!
Because an image restricts,
Binds, grasps, what should remain
unbound and unrepresentable.

An image seeks to have a name:
Thou canst only take it from that
which is small;
Thou shalt not worship the Small!

Thou must believe in the Spirit!
unmediated, emotionless
and selfless.
Thou must, Chosen One, must,
if you wish to remain so.[108]

The earliest sketch for this Op. 27 text by Schönberg is dated October, 1925,[109] and was cited by Schönberg in a letter to Berg almost exactly eight years later after his emigration from Berlin as evidence for his much earlier re-identification with Judaism.[110] Perhaps the first spark, even earlier, can be found in his brief reference to the Idea in the *Requiem* he wrote following the death of his first wife Mathilde in 1923: *"You can never pass away, for you have become an Idea.* [...] *Thus you are now immortal."*[111]

A second key theme in *Moses und Aron* is the discrepancy, as represented in biblical terms, respectively, between speaking to the rock and striking the rock to yield water for the parched Israelites. His theological belief in an unfathomable, unrepresentable God, and the philosophical problem of how to represent that unfathomable God in material life was represented by the biblical discrepancy: to *"speak to"* the rock (Numbers 20:8) or *"to strike"* it (Numbers 20:11, and also in Exodus 17:6) From his very first recorded thoughts about *Der biblische Weg*, Schönberg was preoccupied, as noted above, with the narrative discrepancy between the details in these two biblical accounts, a puzzle that he attempted to probe in both the play and the opera: In the Book of Numbers 20:8, Moses miraculously provides water to the Israelites in the desert by speaking to a rock; however, just three verses later (echoing Exodus 17:6), Moses

108 My translation. For an alternate translation, see Bluma Goldstein: *Reinscribing Moses*, see fn. 3, 141–142.

109 Gemischte Chöre (1925) (ASSV 1.2.1.5., source B^2 | Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien [T22.05]).

110 Letter to Berg, October 16, 1933, see fn. 55.

111 *A Schoenberg Reader*, see fn. 34, 179.

performs the same miracle by *striking* the rock with his staff. That this theme was very much on Schönberg's mind as a central issue while drafting the play can be seen immediately in two handwritten sketch sources for a second draft of *Der biblische Weg*, one a set contained in a handmade cardboard folder dated April 7 – April 25, 1927, and the other a handwritten sheet of paper inscribed with the dates June 12 and 23, 1927. Both sources show *"Sprich zu dem Felsen"* ["Speak to the rock"] as a subtitle for *Der biblische Weg*, one on the box, and the other as a title heading.[112]

This comes through in the playscript, where Max Aruns' appointed high priest Asseino chastises him for trying to be Moses and Aron in one person, uniting both the "man of spirit" and the "man of action," a course which Aruns defends (to his later peril) by noting that Moses himself gave the law, formed an army (Num. 1:3ff), and struck the rock to save the people. Aruns seems to recognize his error in his dying words, when he says:

> Lord you have smitten me. Thus I have brought it upon myself. Thus Asseino was right, when he accused me of being presumptuous, of wanting to be both Moses and Aron in one person. Thus I have betrayed the Idea [den Gedanken verraten], relying upon a machine rather than upon the Spirit [Geist] [...]

In *Der biblische Weg*, Max Aruns' downfall is that he tries to do the impossible – be *both* Moses, the one to whom the inexpressible God reveals himself as the inexpressible Idea, and also be Aron, the one who interprets that inexpressible Idea to the people in some tangible form. Aruns is the pure charismatic dictator, who shapes and molds a state around blind faith to the Idea, but in the end, is betrayed by factions who do not share his particular vision, and is murdered by his own people. It is only his glimpse of the original purity of the Idea that gives him a dying moment of atonement for his reliance upon material forms of security. "Guido," his guide and Joshua-like successor, presumably will set the people's feet back on a purer path. Yet the weapon of mass destruction, inextricably bound together in Arun's thinking as an outgrowth of the Idea itself, remains:

> [Aruns:] We have, with God's help, overcome the resistance of our fiercest opponents. Our belief, our idea [Idee], has triumphed; our statement that "from a good idea [Gedanken] all things flow spontaneously," has proven to be true. | On account of this statement, although it was derived from experience, I have been called a visionary. I had barely conceived of the idea [Gedanken] when simultaneously the way of its realization came to me. I had to keep silent for a long time! I can now lift the veil of

112 Notizen | zu | Der biblische Weg | ("Sprich zu dem Felsen.") (ASSV 1.2.1.2., source G | Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien [T41.07]), dated April 7 – April 25, 1927 and „Sprich zu dem Felsen" (1927) (ASSV 5.3.2.7. | Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien [T01.11]), dated June 12 and 23, 1927.

> secrecy and confirm the guarantee my envoy offered you – namely, that Palestine is to be our final destination. | As he did for the Hebrews at Jericho, God has given into our hands a powerful weapon with which to overpower our enemies: we have our own trumpets of Jericho! An invention, conceived by our General Pinxar, enables us to aim rays at any point around the globe, and at any distance – rays which absorb the oxygen in the air and suffocate all living creatures [...].[113]

In the final speech of the play, Guido attempts to reconcile this confession with a return to the mission of the Chosen People: *"The Jewish nation lives out an Idea* [Gedanken]*: the belief in the one and only, immortal, eternal and unimaginable* [unvorstellbaren] *God."* Yet something alien and more totalizing than seen before in Schönberg's spiritual writings creeps in: *"It strives to ensure the supreme dominance of only this Idea; perhaps in its purest form, this Idea shall rule the world."* Moreover, the weapons of mass destruction are still present, as Móricz pointedly observes.[114] Concerning these weapons, Guido avers:

> [A]s little as we intend to send these [...] rays of material power to any point on this earth; and as little as we intend to seek revenge or use violence against any nation; so much do we, on the contrary, intend to radiate all over the world the illuminating rays of our creed's concept [Glaubensgedanken], so that they may bring forth a new spiritual life. | May these material rays some day be only a symbol of that which also flows spontaneously from the Idea. These material rays are nothing but an emanation of the Idea, but of such a nature that, when set against the emanations of the spirit, they are excluded by the latter from a higher reality.[115]

Yet, like Aron's self-justifications at the end of Act II in *Moses und Aron* and in the Act III drafts, there is much rationalization of the material in this speech. While the biblical figures of Moses and Aaron (and a Joshua figure) are loosely amalgamated in this play around a theology of the *"one, eternal* [...] *unrepresentable God,"* Schönberg's imagination also equipped the people of Zion with a monstrous weapon. Schönberg personally embraced a warlike politics of fighting fascist fire with fire. At one point, according to a much later oral history provided by Ernst Toch's wife Lilly, the Tochs were discussing the situation of the Jews in 1933 in Paris, and in reply to one guest who said *"You Jews* [...] *must not behave as if you were fascists."* Schönberg shouted, *"Of course, jawohl, we are Fascists, and we have to act as such in order to meet the situation."*[116] Scholars have debated to what extent he was actually attracted to fascism *per se*,[117] with Móricz holding the view that *"Schönberg's statements can* [be] *read as those*

113 Arnold Schönberg: Der biblische Weg, see fn. 101, 239.

114 Klara Móricz: *Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 230.

115 Arnold Schönberg: Der biblische Weg, see fn. 101, 327.

116 Lilly Toch: *The Orchestration of a Composer's Life*, see fn. 68, 322, cited in Klara Móricz: *Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 215.

117 For a summary of more recent research on Schönberg's Zionist writings, see Sabine Feisst: *Schönberg's New World*, see fn. 77, 7.

of a fascist sympathizer, despite his being a victim of persecution – and, I believe, would be read that way were not his reputation as a cultural icon of modernism at stake."[118] Brown agrees, but adds that *"Schönberg initially turned to a politics of this sort at least in part because he recognized from experience the power of the idealism behind Nazi politics, and also because he sought some sort of personal exoneration from having earlier subscribed to certain common root ideologies,"*[119] i.e., his admiration for Wagner and the German tradition in music. Alexander Ringer also recognized that Schönberg's political leanings *"dangerously paralleled that of the enemy* [...]," while noting that Schönberg matched and in some ways anticipated the propaganda strategies of the Nazis.[120] Michael Mäckelman asserts, more generously, that while Schönberg embraced a militant and authoritarian form of Zionism, he was in no way *"ever a supporter of concrete fascist ideals."*[121] Mäckelman views Schönberg's willingness to use violence as purely a "tactical" response to confronting the power of the enemy. In perhaps the most sympathetic reading of Schönberg's autocratic tendencies, *"One can only hope that his pronouncements and solutions were merely a gauge of the despair and helplessness experienced in response to a world that seemed to be reeling out of control."*[122]

This comes closest to my own view. Schönberg foresaw the potential for the Nazis' extreme violence against the Jews, even before the genocidal "Final Solution" was set in motion. His embrace of a violent authoritarianism was a result of his own critical brilliance combined with a very common traumatic reaction of all-or-nothing psychological splitting (as I will discuss further below) – heightened by a long dichotomous experience of being either an object of total admiration (his pupils) or total denigration (the critics).

Whatever Schönberg's inner motivations may have been – including a traumatic response to a traumatic threat – his extremism made it impossible for him to generate any enthusiasm among his publishers or other Zionists of a less autocratic political persuasion. The weapons of mass destruction in the play take on a materialist function perhaps somewhat analogous to the Golden Calf in *Moses und Aron*. Guido perceives those "Trumpets of Jericho" to be an interim step, meant to keep the people materially secure. Like Aron, who felt for the people's fear and hunger, Guido states,

118 Klara Móricz: *Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 214–215. In my view Móricz overemphasizes Schönberg's rhetorically countering a critic of his twelve-tone system as "Bolshevik," by saying that it could just as easily be interpreted from a fascist point of view, with the row as *"the Duce, the Fuehrer, on whom all depends, who distributes power and function to every note* [...]" (204, citing Arnold Schönberg: Is it Fair? (1948) (ASSV 3.1.1.30.), published in *Music and Dance in California and the West*. Edited by Richard Drake Saunders (Hollywood 1948), 11.

119 Julie Brown: *Schoenberg and Redemption*, see fn. 27, 168.

120 Alexander Ringer: *Arnold Schoenberg*, see fn. 56, 131, also cited in Klara Móricz: *Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 215.

121 Michael Mäckelmann: *Arnold Schönberg und das Judentum*, see fn. 30, 194, quoted from Klara Móricz: *Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 214.

122 Bluma Goldstein: Schoenberg's Moses und Aron, see fn. 37, 189.

> Striving for spiritual expansion is however, at the most, only a goal for a very distant future [...] We have an immediate goal: we want to feel secure as a nation. We want to be certain that no one can force us to do anything; that no one can hinder us from doing anything. | We do not, however, propose to exercise influence of any kind on other nations. | We have enough to do for our own nation![123]

So for an indefinite interim time (but without the deprivations of the original Hebrews' wanderings in the wildernerness), isolation and safety is assured by having a very material weapon of mass destruction, with only a distant goal of spiritualization:

> As with all ancient peoples, it is our destiny to spiritualize [vergeistigen] ourselves, to set ourselves free from all that is material. | We have one more goal: we must all learn to grasp the concept of the one and only, eternal, and unimaginable [unvorstellbaren] God. | We intend to lead a spiritual live, and no one should be allowed to hinder us. | We want to perfect ourselves spiritually; we want to be free to dream our dream of God – as all ancient peoples, who have left material reality behind them.[124]

By the end of *Der biblische Weg*, the Chosen People are neither in the wilderness, nor are they yet in the Promised Land of pure spiritual peace. They have settled for an isolated material peace, not under of the *"rays"* given off from the Golden Calf[125] (which in the opera also turn out to be violent: its *"gold gleams like blood!"*[126]) but under the "rays" of a suffocating weapon of mass destruction. The hope expressed is that through the protection the weapon affords against the very real and ubiquitous threat of violence, the Jewish people will someday achieve the pure spiritualization for which Schönberg longed. But by the end of the play, that day still appears very far from its realization. And the question of how this *Vergeistigung* is to be attained is left unanswered. The factionalism that resulted in Max Aruns' death is momentarily stopped perhaps by the shock of his death, but what will Guido become as Aruns' successor? Will not Guido, too, following Schönberg's prescription for a successful Zion, have to become an authoritarian "man of action" as well as a visionary "man of spirit"? Whose hand will be on the button of these "Trumpets of Jericho"?

123 Arnold Schönberg: Der biblische Weg, see fn. 101, 327, 329.

124 Ibidem, 329.

125 *Invalid Woman: "O Godly form, your rays give warmth, you heal, as never the sun's rays have healed."* Arnold Schönberg: *Moses und Aron. Opera in three acts*. English translation by Allen Forte (Los Angeles 1957), Act II, Scene 3, 8.

126 Ibidem, 9.

Where the Opera Diverges

This is where *Moses und Aron*, even in its earliest oratorio drafts, diverges from *Der biblische Weg*. As Schönberg was drawn further into writing the oratorio/opera text, and especially later composing the music (which, as he described in 1931 about his own compositional process, inevitably would continue to reshape the text[127]), these two works were becoming increasingly incompatible, not only dramatically, but theologically and philosophically. Both works begin with the same theological belief in the one ineffable God, and the same philosophical dilemma of how to represent that God in material life (represented by the biblical discrepancy: to "speak to" or "to strike the rock.") But there the similarity ends, as setting, plot, and even the characters diverge between the two works. Guido's future vision of spiritualization, purified of the material realm, is the launching point at which Schönberg first put pen to paper with his oratorio version of *Moses und Aron*, but in order to do this, he turned not to an unforeseeable future, but to the biblical past (although in a highly idiosyncratic, revisionist manner.[128]) The very choice of genre signals a different focus – rather than a political play, the oratorio is now a religious work, intended to convey a spiritually uplifting message. It is set not in a futuristic Zionist state, but in the biblical wilderness of material deprivation. Here Schönberg finds a place that symbolizes the purification of the spirit: *"In the wasteland pureness of thought will provide you nurture, sustain you and advance you ..."*[129]

Moses and Aron now appear as the original two biblical figures representing two distinct qualities – the man of spirit vs. the man of eloquence and action. It is not necessary here to rehearse the entire well-known plot of Acts I and II of the opera. The changes from oratorio to opera are mainly formal, but the dramatic action was heightened considerably as Schönberg moved – even before beginning the process of musical composition – from the concert genre to a fully staged Gesamtkunstwerk,[130] complete with an orgy scene around the Golden Calf to rival Stravinsky's 1913 *Rite of Spring* (and no doubt intended to do so!)[131] As soon as Moses withdraws to the mountain to be in communion with the Invisible God, all hell breaks loose – literally – as the artist/interpreter

127 Letter to Alban Berg, August 8, 1931 (carbon copy; The Library of Congress, see fn. 15 | ASCC 2398); "[...] *the libretto* [of *Moses und Aron*] *being definitely finished only during the composing, some of it even afterwards. This proves an extremely good method*"; cited in Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt: Schoenberg, see fn. 82, 343.

128 Bluma Goldstein: Schoenberg's Moses und Aron, see fn. 37, 184–189.

129 Arnold Schönberg: *Moses und Aron*, see fn. 125, Act I, Sc. 4, 5.

130 I discussed this in *Schoenberg and the God-Idea*, see fn. 3, 91–112. The transition from the relatively neat oratorio transcript (Source TC, see fn. 1) to the corrections and additions to the typescript (Source TF, see fn. 1) and then the virtually three-dimensional cut-and-pasted source TI (see fn. 1) shows the creative process involved in this transformation from oratorio to opera.

131 Note Schönberg's comment about the stage directions taxing any production; note the attempt made in the Huillet/Straub film.

allows further concreteness of expression to give in to the people's demands for a sensual gratification of their desires in the form of a tangible God. A re-emergence of Schönberg's earlier expressionistic depictions in music of Freudian sex and aggression, fused with echoes of Stravinskian orgiastic thumping and "primitivism," is nevertheless undergirded by melodies and harmonies following a strict twelve-tone method, expressed in richly colored orchestrations. This music also takes Aron's coloratura to new heights. Murder, rape, and mayhem prevail until Moses' return and with a stern barrage of Sprechstimme (*"Vergeh, du Abbild des Unvermögens* [...][!]" [Begone, you image of powerlessness!]), the Golden Calf vanishes.

Yet Aron does not likewise become powerless. He causes Moses to see that even Moses' own words, and the tablets of the Law itself, are representations, and thus idols. Act II ends with Moses in despair, crying out to God: if everything Aron had done was to be in the end permitted, and if he himself had fashioned a false image, then all had been madness before: *"O Wort, du Wort das mir fehlt!"* [O word, thou word that I lack!] In the background, the people exit following the pillar of cloud (another image), with Aron slowly following behind them.

If the opera had ended here – if Schönberg had agreed that the opera ended here – the utter inexpressibility of the Idea would have triumphed. Moses would have been defeated, as all human utterance of any kind would have been undone by the unutterability of the divine Idea, while Aron and the masses would have continued seeking their material version of the Promised Land unimpeded. Adorno and others who wanted to insist upon the tragic dialectic between Idea and Representation would be right. This, however, was not Schönberg's aim.

There is a parallel here with Max Aruns' dying epiphany, but in the opera, Moses does not die. In every sketch for Act III, labeled "Arons Tod" or "Arons End," it is only Aron – the mouthpiece – who dies, but not yet Moses, the visionary – although neither will see the Promised Land. There is no weapon of mass destruction in the opera. The Promised Land is still far off, and there is no conquest – while in the fragmentary versions of Act III, there is an evolving vision, as we shall see shortly, in which the ending of *Moses und Aron* grows darker and more bloody. At the end of Act II, Aron traipses off unscathed, following the pillar of cloud like the idolatrous people before him, but Schönberg cannot rest until Aron is punished by death in Act III for his faithlessness to the ineffable God-Idea.

The Drafts of Act III: A Progression in Violence

The published version of Act III, dated 1932 (based on the first clean typescript of the full libretto), begins with the stage direction: *"Moses enters.* [A]*ron, a prisoner in chains, follows, dragged in by two soldiers who hold him fast by the shoulders and arms. Behind him come the Seventy Elders."*[132] Where did these soldiers come from? Schönberg would have said, "from the Book of Numbers," but one is tempted to answer: From *Der biblische Weg*!

This is not how Schönberg first conceived of Act III. As the years went on, and the drumbeat of the Nazis' racial antisemitism became more and more overtly genocidal, Act III became darker, its setting became more like that of the martial state in *Der biblische Weg* than the wilderness existence of *Moses und Aron*, and the figure of Moses became more like Max Aruns, the authoritarian "man of action," than the inarticulate Moses in Acts I and II of the opera. And as Bluma Goldstein points out, notably, the people are virtually missing from Act III – *"What remains in this 'promised land'* [...] *are Moses and a totally silenced vox populi – two virtually silent warriors, a group of mute, quiescent Elders, and an absent people."*[133] The [biblical] nation "[']*has a voice* [...] *it moans and groans, cries, is euphoric at times, complains frequently, and rebels against Moses and God time and time again.' That nation has, however, vanished from the operatic text."*[134] For Goldstein, this highlights how the political structure depicted in Act III, resembles *"the authoritarian Führer-Volk structure of all-powerful leader and submissive followers united in a lifelong abstract spiritual mission."*[135]

In the first handwritten draft of the oratorio, and the virtually identical oratorio typescript of 1928,[136] Moses simply says, *"Aron, your time has come: you must die!"* Aron expresses his wish to enter the Promised Land, and Moses regretfully tells him that neither of them can, because they struck the rock. (In this, Moses acknowledges his complicity.) By allowing his own thoughts to invade the Idea, Aron lost the Land, Moses tells him, although he had already been in it because he had grasped the Idea through Moses' voice. *"Therefore, you must now surrender. Lie down low, die! I will reconcile you with God."*

In the second scene, Moses addresses the people, telling them that they are to forget both Aron and himself, but after a time of diaspora, they will be blessed with their adherence to an immaterial, pure duty – a kind of spiritual mission impossible that will be their salvation:

132 Arnold Schönberg: *Moses und Aron*, see fn. 125, 12.

133 Bluma Goldstein: Schoenberg's Moses und Aron, see fn. 37, 183.

134 Ibidem, citing biblical scholar Ilana Pardes.

135 Ibidem, 184.

136 Handwritten manuscript (Source TB | Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien [T08.09]) in *Moses und Aron* (Sämtliche Werke. Reihe B, Band 8, 2), see fn. 1, 34, and source TC (ibidem, 35).

> [...] the Eternal who chose you to your duty, that you would be filled with sorrow and joy, as long as there are people on this earth, and as long as enemies are found to Him and you: the Almighty has blessed you. When Aron and Moses are past, when Eleazar and Joshua are dead: One will always be with you, to keep the God-Idea of your chosenness pure. And even if all believe, you will always be in doubt [but] know the right by which to believe your mission: the ungratifying pure teachings of God. So shall scorn attend you, persecution consecrate you; So shall sorrow sanctify you! Chorus: Consecrate us Moses in the name of the Eternal, the Almighty, who led us out of the Land of abomination and will bring us into the Land of desirelessness, where milk and honey flow and the pure Idea of the one **God**[137] will be thought and felt by all. Amen! [138]

There is no militancy here, nothing material at all – just an apophatic theology and a keenly ascetic future. The brothers will be denied entrance into the Promised Land, but Aron's death is not framed as punishment here; Moses promises to reconcile him with God. Both Aron and Moses die when it is their allotted time.[139]

By the time of this draft, Schönberg had already been in Berlin two years, and nothing had come of his efforts to publish or stage *Der biblische Weg*. Nor did he write anything further in depth about Zionism at that time (as far as we know). It was as if he, like Moses, had retreated for a while to the mount of revelation to resume his communion with the God-Idea, and (at least temporarily) left the workings-out of a material Zion to others. As subsequent fragments for Act III show, he continued to be preoccupied with the primary issues of Idea and Representation, and of speaking to vs. striking the rock. Around the same time, Schönberg completed a draft (dated Nov. 16, 1929) for the first of the *Six Pieces for Male Chorus*, op. 35 No. 1, titled "Inhibition." The text includes the lines *"But they speak all the more freely | the less the Idea inhibits them! | How difficult it is to express an Idea!"* In March, 1933, he wrote to Walter Eidlitz, who had sent him an autographed copy of his own play about Moses (*Der Berg in der Wüste* [The Mountain in the Wilderness]), that his own Moses *"more resembles – of course only in outward aspect – Michelangelo's. He is not human at all."*[140]

137 Typed over several times in the original typescript to create a boldface type.

138 Translated from *Moses und Aron*, source TC0148–150, see fn. 1, 97.

139 In 1929, Schönberg wrote a similar thought to his sister-in-law Mitzi Seligmann (photocopy; Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien [Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt collection, 17] | ASCC 1639): *"The Lord always looks for people whom he allows to suffer! People who are less worthy, who cannot bear it and will not be able to find improvement through it, are spared everything unpleasant! So be proud! One is chosen to suffer! If people are allowed to make themselves comfortable this is done at the cost of a higher blessedness!"* (translation in Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt: *Schoenberg*, see fn. 82, 342.)

140 Letter to Walter Eidlitz, March 15, 1933 (carbon copy; The Library of Congress, see fn. 15 | ASCC 2325), English translation in Arnold Schoenberg: *Letters*, see fn. 55, 172.

In the undated sketch fragments from this period (interleaved in the first oratorio typescript, so presumably dating later than October, 1928, but not later than March, 1932), there are few changes. Moses elaborates that the land Aron showed to the people was *"an unreal country"* that would only *"reveal its fulfillment in poverty."*[141] Neither Moses' nor Aron's graves would ever be found because Moses allowed Aron to make the images, so he must share his fate – erasure from history – again alluding to Moses' complicity, which Schönberg would elaborate later in the same draft. In these fragments Schönberg also goes deeper into the philosophical reflection based on striking vs. speaking to the rock. In a speech to Aron, Moses proposes that perhaps the Word still retains a connection to the God-Idea, but the Deed (*"Tat"*) only brings further corruption or alienation from the God-Idea:

> He who gives himself to images, loses himself to them so much that he is alienated from the origin: the Idea. Your order was: to speak to the rock. An image of convincing power: the Word that expresses the Idea is able to sustain life. This image was not enough for you: instead of the Word, you had to set forth the Deed, the action and thus robbed the image of all connection with the Idea.[142]

In subsequent dialogue, Aron protests that *"The people threatened us"* and Moses agrees, *"We feared their power more than that of the Idea. That is why we allowed the consequences of our act, instead of those of the Idea."*[143] (This element is eliminated in the published version of Act III.) Then follows a rather Schopenhauerian[144] philosophical reflection, unique to this unpublished source:

> Aron: My mouth spoke only what you thought. If I spoke wrongly, so you thought wrongly! Moses:[145] [...] If you understood me wrongly, it is because I thought wrongly. Maybe I also wished that the people would see the power of the Eternal. Moses' Complicity The deed [Die Tat]: an image [ein Bild] of the Gestalt [der Gestalt]; The Gestalt: an image of the Word [des Wortes] The Word: an image of the Concept [des Begriffs]. The Concept: an image, a part of the Idea [des Gedankens]. Certainly the deed still preserves a fragment [Bruchteil] of the Idea. [underlining original][146]

In this same set of handwritten pages, Moses goes on to assert that God is so unknowable and God's ways are so unfathomable, that even reward or punishment cannot be understood according to human terms. Good deeds are not necessarily rewarded, nor evil punished, according to human morality. Human

141 Translated from *Moses und Aron*, source TF18 [14r], see fn. 1, 242.

142 Ibidem, source TF7 [5r], see fn. 1, 241.

143 Ibidem, source TF12 [9r].

144 Cf., Pamela [Cooper-]White: Schoenberg and Schopenhauer, in *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 8/1 (June 1984), 39–57 and idem: *Schoenberg and the God-Idea*, see fn. 3, 5, 67–76.

145 Several variants in the manuscript at this point.

146 Translated from *Moses und Aron*, source TF8 [6r], TF10 [7r], TF11 [8r], see fn. 1, 241. Thanks to Jan Rehmann for consultation on translation of this paragraph!

deeds do not move God. (As Nazi rhetoric and racist violence against innocent Jews continued to rise, God's inaction to save them must have weighed on Schönberg's mind.) Schönberg writes rapidly here, without complete sentences:

> The fact that you hit the rock proves that you do not trust the Word (the Idea). The unimaginable Even then, we have no image to make of the Unimaginable if one can believe in guilt and effort, merit and reward, retribution and promise. All this is no measure | There is no measure of that of the Eternal.[147]

In the last notation in this manuscript, however, Aron throws Moses' insistence on images as blasphemy back in Moses' face (Schönberg repeats this twice on the page): *"Spoken to the rock, beaten on the rock, there is always an image."* Aron continues: *"The Almighty* [!] *does not need either Word nor Rock if he wants to give water."* In a somewhat garbled passage, Schönberg has Aron continue with this line of reasoning to prove the sovereignty [*"Herrschaft"*] of the image over the Idea – without the Image (i.e., without Representation), the Idea would have no way to reveal itself. Either way, by word or action, water is extracted from the rock by force, even *"at the Almighty's bidding."*[148]

This textual sketch material, which precedes the oratorio-to-opera draft, while tangled in a now three-way conundrum from Idea to Word and Word to Deed, remains very much in the realm of philosophy and theology, and very far from a Zionist land of politics and armies. It rests as much on the mountaintop of the Idea as it is in the wasteland of thirst and rocks and water. Both Moses and Aron will die, but not before having a heady intellectual dispute, and as this draft concludes, they are both still alive, still arguing. As yet, the Seventy Elders and the Soldiers are nowhere on the scene.

But this was about to change. As Schönberg moved from these handwritten pages to a reworking of his oratorio typescript into the first full draft of an opera libretto (some time, I would suggest, between 1930 and early 1932[149]), the drums of war and the blood of martyrs were about to enter the text – in its margins. Although Schönberg did not produce any public Zionist writings during this time, continuing to focus on his compositional work, his ear had to have been keenly attuned to the increasing warning signs in current political events. Hitler had not yet fully seized power in Germany, but within three years would be elevated to the role of Chancellor. The National Socialist party was

147 Ibidem, source TF15 [11r], TF16 [12r].

148 Ibidem, source TF21 [16r], 242.

149 If only on the basis of certain content changes between the 1928 and 1932 drafts, I would date the draft TF (*Moses und Aron* [Sämtliche Werke. Reihe B, Band 8, 2], see fn. 1, 41) as preceding the large assemblage of cut-and-paste and tipped in changes to the oratorio typescript, "DICH 23," labeled by Schönberg *Moses und Aron* with "Oratorio" crossed out and "Oper" written in at the top (TI, 42). This source probably dates roughly from 1930 until the clean 1932 typescript TK (47), which served as the basis for the published version.

just two years away from winning the largest share of the popular vote in the *Reichstag.* By this time, pseudo-scientific theories of supposedly race-based Aryan superiority had thoroughly supplanted the more religiously and culturally-oriented antisemitism of the previous century in Europe, and Schönberg had experienced his own disillusionment about any aspiration to German cultural assimilation. Among Jewish activists, Zionism had both religious Orthodox and secular Jewish adherents, as well as the much more militant splinter movement led by Jabotinsky.[150]

Although this opera draft is laden with cut-and-pasted additions to Acts I and II, the pages for Act III (which are mostly copies of the original oratorio typescript) are less marked up, and have no loosely inserted fragments. The opening dialogue between Moses and Aron is greatly shortened after Schönberg briefly introduces, then scribbles out, the added word *"Sünde"* [sin] in Moses' opening reprimand of Aron. Their dialogue simply concludes with Aron's protest that he was to speak to the heart while Moses spoke to the intellect, performing visible wonders when the spoken word did not persuade. There is no further speech from Moses, no ordering of Aron to surrender, to lie down and die, and no promise to reconcile Aron with God. All this material is crossed out and a line drawn with "2. Scene" heavily inked in. The typescript continues as Moses steps forward, and Aron simply drops dead: *"Aron ist tot."*

Notably, however, two new elements are scribbled in on the verso of the first page of this Act III draft, showing the warlike drift of Schönberg's thinking: *"The Jewish people is the people who brought forth the Idea"* [*"Das jüdische Volk ist das Volk das den Gedanken hervorgebracht hat"*] and *"Declaration of War"* [*"Kriegs-Erklärung"*].[151] In careful, almost calligraphic ink, he writes under *"Scene 2"*: *"In the land of promise my Word will lead you."*[152] But on the back of this page, another new and darker element is again scrawled in ink: "People of Martyrs" [*"Volk von Märtyrern"*][153] and under that, in pencil, again, "Declaration of War." The mission of the Chosen People is retained, along with the blessing of persecution and the pure belief in the God-Idea.[154] But in this draft Schönberg adds a new element, writing after *"So shall sorrow sanctify you* [...]" *"to suffer for it: beaten, without fighting to win with it, without striking."* In this manuscript,

150 For an illuminating discussion of Jabotinsky from both a political and psychoanalytic analysis, see the chapter The Hidden Life of Vladimir Jabotinsky in Jacqueline Rose: *The Last Resistance* (London 2013), 93–110.

151 Translated from *Moses und Aron*, source TI690 [23v], TI691 [23v], see fn. 1, 244.

152 Ibidem, source TI693 [24r=25], 245.

153 Ibidem, source TI698 [24v].

154 Strangely, along with an elaborated version of the Diaspora, he tells the people in this version that he will go on with them to the Promised Land where they will grow and prosper *"until you are so strong that it can no longer hold you. Then the Eternal will scatter you in all countries, then you should spread the true Idea."* (Ibidem, source TI693 [24r=25], 245) He comments to himself with an arrow pointing here *"Why does Moses speak popularly here to the people? Is Eleazar already speaking for him?"* (TI694, TI696 [24r=25]) and then corrects himself: *"I will not go with you for a long time. I too, like my brother Aron, will not enter the country."* (TI697, [24r=25 – 25r=26]) This is all left out in the clean typescript which follows this version.

Schönberg annotates the final chorus "***pp*** without crescendo" and underlines *"the Land of desirelessness,"* adding an exclamation point in the margin.

A new clean typescript appears in 1932,[155] which became the exemplar from which Gertrud Schönberg authorized the published version of Act III. It is considerably leaner and more coherent than the proliferation of overlapping fragments in the oratorio-to-opera source that preceded it. (While Schönberg himself certainly was more than capable of producing texts that were both elegant and forceful, this version of Act III is so much cleaner than what preceded it, I wondered if Gertrud – who herself proved to be a proficient librettist with her text for *Von heute auf morgen*, op. 32 – might not also have brought her editorial craft to this version.) Tortured philosophical discourses (including the Schopenhauerian passage from Idea to Word to Concept to Deed) are eliminated, and the dialogue between Moses and Aron is less redundant. Aron is given new words for his protest: *"Your Word never came to the people uninterpreted. With the staff, therefore, I also spoke to the rock in its language, which the people also understand."*[156] Moses is also given new words for his rebuke:

> You speak more simply [or worse – *"schlechter"* –] than you understand, for you know that the rock is, like the wasteland and the burning bush – three that give not to the body what it needs with regard to the Spirit – is, I say, an image of the soul, whose very renunciation is sufficient for eternal life. And the rock, even as all images, obeys the word, from whence it came to be manifested. Thus, you won the people not for the eternal one, but for yourself ...[157]

In this version, the traces of "martyrs" introduced by hand on the reverse sides of pages of the previous draft are left out, as is "declaration of war." However, violence and authoritarianism are introduced in new ways. In this published version, for the first time, Aron is dragged in by soldiers, a prisoner in chains, and for the first time asks Moses, *"Will you then kill me?"* Moses responds, *"It is not a matter of your life*". Their dialogue proceeds as continual mutual interruption (as is annotated directly in previous drafts), but with shortened phrases. Their separate callings – to speak in images vs. ideas – and Aron's desire for visible miracles and a tangible vs. "unreal" promised land are retained. Moses' complicity is eliminated – it is Aron alone who is held responsible for striking the rock. Moses is now clear that the rock obeys the word *"from whence it came to be manifested."* Aron had only won the people for himself, not for the Eternal One. God is unfathomable, not bound by human standards – even when

155 Source TK in *Moses und Aron* [Sämtliche Werke. Reihe B, Band 8, 2], see fn. 1, 47.

156 In Arnold Schönberg: *Moses und Aron*, see fn. 125, 12–13, Forte's translation*:* *"Never did your word reach the people without meaning. And thus did I speak to the rock in its language, which the people also understand."*

157 This and following quotes, ibidem, 13.

it comes to punishment or reward. All these key ideas are now compacted in clear speech, with Aron making little comeback. The soldiers ask *"Shall we kill him?"* Moses instructs them for the first time in this version, *"Set him free, and if he can, he shall live."* The stage direction follows: Aron, free, stands up and then falls down dead.

But before answering the soldiers, Moses interpolates the idea of the people's duty to use their gifts rightly as the Chosen People. This speech brings back the idea of diaspora from the oratorio draft, but otherwise replaces that earlier version of his last address to the people.

> Whensoever you went forth amongst the people and employed those gifts – which you were chosen to possess so that you could fight for the divine Idea – whensoever you employed those gifts for false and negative ends, that you might rival and share the lowly pleasure of strange peoples, and whensoever you had abandoned the wasteland's renunciation and your gifts had led you to the highest summit, then as a result of that misuse you were and ever shall be hurled back into the wasteland.

The opera concludes with triumphal words by Moses to the people, promising that whenever they lose sight of the goal of remaining true to the intangible, ungratifying, unrepresentable God-Idea and are thrown back into the wilderness, they will be purified from their material desires and once again be recalled to the mission for which they were chosen and set apart, to live at one with the Eternal: *"But in the wasteland you shall be invincible and shall achieve the goal: unity with God."*

However inscrutable audiences and critics might have found this version if it had ever been set to music, this was the conclusion of the opera that Schönberg finally authorized to be performed on the operatic stages of the world.[158] It was the clearest expression of his personal theological conviction and presumably remained so for the rest of his life.

The problem is, this was not Schönberg's final expression of Act III, even without venturing into musical composition (as he did again, very briefly, in 1937).[159] The faint handwritten traces of "martyrs" and "war" appeared sometime before March 1932. The introduction of soldiers and Aron in chains

158 Only a concert performance the Golden Calf scene from Act II was ever mounted in his lifetime – premiered at Darmstadt under the baton of Hermann Scherchen on July 2 1951, just 11 days before Schönberg's death – Oliver W. Neighbour: Art. Moses und Aron, see fn. 3.

159 The only musical sketches for Act III are a few bars contained in the manuscript version of Acts I and II, source Ab in *Arnold Schönberg: Moses und Aron. Oper in drei Akten. Kritischer Bericht, Skizzen.* Edited by Christian Martin Schmidt (Mainz, Wien 1980) (Sämtliche Werke. Abteilung III: Bühnenwerke. Reihe B, Band 8, 1), 8 (c. 1930–1932) (Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien [MS 63, 2995]), showing a few measures intended to begin Act III, similar to other "wasteland music" in Act I; and a few bars of buzzing tremolo measures in brass and bass clarinet as Aron is dragged in source Ae (28), a small sketchbook (Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin [N.Mus.Nachl. 15,1]), dated 1937, page 40.

in the clean typescript were also making their appearance in the text before the antisemitic President of the Prussian Academy, Max von Schillings, declared in real life in a March 1, 1933 meeting of the Academy Senate that they should follow Hitler's determination to "break the Jewish grip" on music.[160] Schönberg abruptly left that meeting never to return, and his family fled Berlin two months later. But Schönberg the librettist was even less able to leave the Chosen People in the pure, ungratifying glare of the wasteland in Act III after his formal return to Judaism in Paris and his emigration to America in October, 1933. That year, his vision, already prescient with foreboding in the years before Hitler's accession to power early in 1933, became even darker.

Shortly after his emigration from Berlin, he turned his attention toward a more direct involvement in the Zionist movement, as detailed above. Moshe Lazar puts it thus:

> Having written The Biblical Way and composed Moses and Aron [Acts I and II], [...] in real life Schönberg then assumed the role of his imaginary Max Aruns, trying to live out his character's spiritual, political, and military agenda. For some twenty years, Schönberg essentially became a modern-day prophet, a Jeremiah clamoring at the gates, forecasting European Jewry's impending doom [...].[161]

Schönberg continued to brood over details of Act III of *Moses und Aron*. Text sketches from this period are all handwritten, on loose notebook pages or other sheets of paper. There are numerous repeated sections, often with only the most minute changes from one revision to the next – evincing a ruminative, even obsessional thought process. The "image" of the Promised Land, shortened just to one phrase in the clean typescript, is worked over in detail six times in two manuscripts from this period.[162] In both these sources Schönberg also adds a stage direction to Moses' first words to Aron *"(calm, but hard),"* and after saying *"Aron! Now it is enough! You must die*" he adds *"The God you reveal is a God of powerlessness."*[163] Moses' complicity is also brought back in one of these manuscripts, although here it is only Aron who is blamed for striking the rock and alienating the deed from the source and the Idea. Still, neither will enter the promised land. In several reworked passages, Moses says, *"only the deed, the action, was enough for you! Therefore, you wanted to set foot in*

160 Mark Berry: *Arnold Schoenberg*, see fn. 17, 150; Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt: *Schoenberg*, see fn. 82.

161 Moshe Lazar: Arnold Schoenberg and His Doubles, see fn. 29, 94–95. Lazar goes on to detail Schönberg's Zionist writings and correspondence on Zionism (94–96, 105–114).

162 Scources TM and TN in *Moses und Aron*, see fn. 1, 48. Given the philosophical nature of these drafts, and their similarity to the issues Schönberg was grappling with in the many layers of the source TI (the complicated "~~Oratorio~~ Oper" source), and refined in the clean 1932 typescript TK – there is nothing substantively new in the content, but rather a continuously and minutely detailed reworking of the same philosophical ground in these two documents – I would tend to date these handwritten sources TM and TN sometime close to the production of the clean typescript (whether before, during or after), and likely before the traumatic emigration from Berlin in 1933.

163 Translated from *Moses und Aron*, source TM16 [1r], see fn. 1, 247.

the land and therefore you brought guilt upon yourself, and me with you"[164]; in the second manuscript he elaborates twice *"an unreal land where milk and honey flow"* and in the margin he writes, underlined, *"Moses' Complicity,"* as the text continues, *"so we both fell into guilt: me with you: you should speak to the rock, that water flows out of it. But there you struck it,"* adding just below: *"Aron: But you Moses called me to strike the rock. Moses* [echoing Max Aruns' final speech in *Der biblische Weg*?]: *I atone with you, because I have deviated from the Idea."*[165] [emphasis added]

Again, among three sources hand dated "22.VI.1934" and "23.VI.1934", there are also six different but similar versions of Moses' statement to Aron: *"You, who run away from the Word with the image of it, you yourself live in the images you pretend to create for the people* [...] *You have created them and how you are fading with them. The Source, alienated from the Idea, neither avails you the Word or the Image."*[166] In the 1934 sketches, Schönberg is still struggling with what constitutes an image, what belongs to the Idea, and what (such as the Word) might serve as an intermediary, perhaps to enable God's self-revelation. In only one of these sketches, Moses insists: *"And the rock – an image like the thornbush – lives by the Eternal Word. By his Word – and that is no image!"*[167]

Again, only in this handwritten source, Moses tells Aron, *"The Idea releases you as little as it does me: 'Thou shalt not make an image'* [...] *You can, you may make no image of the Idea the promised land of the Idea the A*[lmighty]." The theme of God's utter freedom from human standards of reward and punishment is also brought back from drafts previous to the 1932 clean typescript:

> Being bound to his word, as to a law about him, would that be an Almighty? You have always made the image of an impotent God, who is forced to reward and punish according to the actions of men. Man does good or evil out of free will, but can the Almighty not do otherwise than to reward the good, to punish evil?[168]

The Discovery of the Kotte Manuscript

In addition to the above mentioned sources, the Arnold Schönberg Center in Vienna was able to acquire a set of several handwritten pages previously unknown to scholars, containing sketches for Act III, dated in Schönberg's hand, *"21.VI.1934 New York."*[169] These certainly belong with the previously known June 22–23, 1934 sources.[170] Taken together with the other New York

164 Ibidem, source TM10 [1r unten], 249.

165 Ibidem, source TN9, TN10, 249–250.

166 Ibidem, source TM8 [1c-1dr], TN7, TO10 [1r], see fn. 1, 249.

167 Ibidem, Source TM13 [2r], 250.

168 Ibidem, Source TM15 [2r], 251.

169 Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien (Kotte Autographs Collection).

170 *Moses und Aron*, source TO, see fn. 1, 48 (Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien [T63.08]).

manuscripts, all of which belong to the year following Schönberg's emigration to the U.S., this newly discovered source contains elements in Act III that reflect a new, much darker and more violent character to the conclusion of the opera than Schönberg had previously envisioned.

In the June 21 Kotte manuscript, war is on, and martyrdom is once again highlighted:

The Jewish people are the people that Gave birth to the Idea
Declaration of war to the world – a people from martyrs
Moses speaks directly here to the people (popular ???)
So the Idea lives forever

Most shockingly, and only in this source, an alternative, much more violent death is depicted for Aron on page [1]: As in other versions, Moses tells Aron, *"Lie down and die. I will reconcile you with the Eternal."* But then comes the stage direction: *"Aron is hurled to the ground by the Elders and covered with stones."*[171] Whatever else was going through Schönberg's mind after Hitler's accession to power in 1933, the triumph of the Nazi party, and the purge of Jews from his own academy, the consequences of the dispute between Moses and Aron was no longer purely theological, nor was Aron's death a metaphysical matter. It was during this year that Schönberg became preoccupied again with a militant Zionism that would meet force with force. Schönberg's Zionism took a much more materialist and radically activist approach than most other Zionist movements of his time, creating a virtually unsolvable split between blind faith and action; between his austerely apophatic theology and his activist political views. In this Kotte manuscript, written in June of 1934, Aron dies the ancient and primitive death of retribution by the elders of a community for violation of its sacred laws – death by stoning.[172]

This manuscript, acquired by the Arnold Schönberg Center well after the publication of the critical edition of *Moses und Aron*,[173] consists of four

171 Emphasis added.

172 On page 2, as well, Schönberg is still struggling with Aron's death: [Inserted in pencil after "only in renunciation ... can faith be fulfilled" ... see above], my translation – [inserted below The solders ask: Shall we kill him?] – [inserted later above in ink: Aron asks: Will you kill me? – ~~Moses: I do not want to kill you! Stand up and if you can live thereafter, so live.~~ – Moses to the soldiers: Let him go free: If he can, let him live!] – Aron stands up and falls down dead.

173 Christian Martin Schmidt: *Schönbergs Oper Moses und Aron*, see fn. 86.

pages – three sheets previously stapled together[174] but in no certain order prior to stapling – with an undated cover sheet originally folded over the other three. In one version from among these pages, Aron's death in Act III appears to have been handwritten first in ink, identical to a portion of the clean typescript of 1932. He then added new material in pencil, along with some suggestive brief notations scrawled diagonally in the margin:[175]

> Jubilation
> The Unrepresentable [*"Der Unvorstellbare"*]
> Demagogy
>
> An image looks with your eyes
> into the world of Ideas

On the second sheet, Schönberg introduces a new thematic element as Moses insists on the people continuing to wander in the wilderness, which he foresees will lead them back to faith. Schönberg does not write out any dialogue here, but narrates (presumably as notes to himself):

> Moses insists on ~~W~~ continuing the wandering in the wilderness.
> Aron wants to go into the Promised Land.
> Moses glimpses the faith that results from the wandering in the wilderness.
> The people are chosen for this Idea. All of their abilities, physical and spiritual, should enable them heroically to believe in such a God. The people are endowed with all gifts for this. ~~Always.~~
>
> But Aron, instead of leading them into the promised spiritual land, wants to lead them into a promised, sensual land.
>
> But Moses proves to Aron that only in the wilderness, only in the turning away from all that is sensual, only in renunciation, only in the foreclosure of all the joys and dreams of other peoples can this faith be fulfilled.

This is followed by virtually the same ending as in the clean typescript, with Aron's falling down dead and Moses promising the people that if they misuse their gifts they will be thrown back into the wilderness, but there they will be invincible and reach the goal of unity with God.

The theme of the erasure of Aron's grave is restored from drafts preceding the 1932 clean copy:

174 As indicated by holes and rust marks.

175 Transcription by Julia Bungardt, my translation. Punctuation and underlining in the original.

~~He/it~~ ~~you~~ made them images,
~~He/it has~~ ~~you~~ made them for yourself – ~~*illegible crossed-out phrase*~~
as images fade
so you disappear, you fade now
and no trace of you remains
not even of your grave:
~~Also your~~ images shall? not be revered.

The element of punishment and reward is also expanded in both the first page and on the overleaf (not entirely coherent), showing Schönberg still struggling to find the wording he most believes in, with additional words inserted and crossed out in the margins:

> [overleaf:] To build oneself an image of God: Expect a certain reaction to our actions that he must reward when we are good | he " " when we are bad: meaning: To conceive of a God dependent on humankind: he must reward |he must punish } according to a law over him!

And on page [1] he continues in the same vein:

> You, however, act like the people
> Because you feel and therefore think as they do,
> the God you show them is an image of powerlessness;
> (is) dependent on a law greater than itself;
> (is) bound by his word;
> the way people behave, so he must
> punish their evil deeds, reward their good:
> which people have done as a result of free will.
> The Almighty, however [– who keeps this attribute forever –]
> is obligated to nothing, bound by nothing.
> [inserted with pencil:]
> Here the images rule over the Idea, instead of expressing it.
> He allowed you to behold a land to proclaim, to draw toward, and to find faith

In the Kotte manuscript, too, is the mention that *"the rock – an image like the thorn bush – obeys the Word, from which it became manifest.* [Inserted with pencil:] *But whoever strikes it obeys the law of images."*

But earlier, unique to this source, on the overleaf, is the striking sentence: "Moses somehow reconciles himself with the images." [*"Moses söhnt sich irgendwie mit den Bildern aus."*] This *"irgendwie"* – this *"somehow"* – is the knot at the heart of the philosophical problem which Schönberg was never able to work

out. Here, and in no other source, Schönberg suggests, even promises himself on June 21st, that he will get back to himself on this. As he had intimated in just one early source where he drew out that Schopenhauerian chain of associations from Idea to Concept to Word to Gestalt to Image even to Deed, as in the early re-workings of the oratorio typescript – which early on he had also associated with Moses' complicity – Schönberg desired, like Moses, to forge a path from Idea to Representation, from the God-Idea to Revelation. This yearning had not left him even in 1934 after his flight from the Nazis.

Just one day later, however, he abandons this hope once and for all in the subsequent New York drafts mentioned above. Twice, above the dates *"22"* and *"23 June,"* respectively, he has Moses insist that the rock, the wilderness and the bush, all three, are images that cannot give the body what it needs, *"give the spirit of the soul the means to eternal life. Even the rock – an image like the bush – then obeys the word, then it has become an apparition"* and *"whereupon it became an apparition, but whoever strikes upon it obeys the law of images."*[176] Idea and Word may somehow relate, but Image and Deed still stand forever alienated from the Idea.

In the two days in June that follow the Kotte draft, Schönberg writes almost feverishly. Several times in the same manuscripts, he rewrites the rapid dialogue between Moses and Aron in which Moses castigates Aron again for subjugating the God-idea to the calf and the pillars of cloud and fire, sacrificing the freedom to serve the God Idea for *"slavery of Godlessness and pleasure."* He elaborates from the clean typescript of 1932 where Moses says, *"There you made my staff a leader, my power was to free the people; there the water of the Nile was to testify to the Almighty,"* adding, ***"which stands as nothing but desirelessness."***[177] There are no really new ideas in the June 22–23 scripts, and the stoning of Aron is never repeated in any source. Aron's death returns to the version in the clean typescript – he is set free, but falls down dead, and Moses' final speech to the people is also the same as in the published version of the opera. Echoing many previous versions, including the clean typescript, he writes:

> Images lead and dominate this people, that you have liberated and foreign desires are their Gods, and lead them back into the slavery of Godlessness and pleasure. You betrayed God to the Gods, the Idea to the images, this chosen people to the others, the extraordinary to the commonplace [...].[178]

176 Translated from *Moses und Aron*, source TO24 [3r], see fn. 1, 247, 250.

177 Ibidem, source TO15 [2r], 253. Bold in original.

178 Ibidem, source TO19 [2r].

A Bloody Final Sketch

The most violent imagery of all for Act III was yet to come. It appears about one year later in the last extant sketch, dated *"5/V. 1935"* in Schönberg's hand.[179] This final draft was written just two months after Hitler re-armed Germany on March 16, 1935 in violation of the Versailles Treaty that ended World War I.[180] The Nuremburg laws were enacted soon thereafter on September 15, 1935. Schönberg clearly foresaw the destruction of European Jewry and his prophecy was recorded in his last fragmentary sketch for the opera libretto. There are two versions, both involving wholesale murder of the Jewish people. On page 1r, just before Aron falls dead, Moses shows him the following vision:

> Aron, about to fall dead, is called by Moses: This is your last moment. Now you will see what you have been blind to so far. (The front stage goes dark.)
> [There is an entirely new, extended Inszenierung as follows:]
> /: The scene changes into a mountainous landscape, of quite different character in the individual parts. Different climates and continents are partly visible at the same time in the lower parts, partly in succession alternately. On an elevation shaded from behind by a high mountain are Jews, some in desert clothing, some (later in the orthodox clothing of the (Eastern) Jews of exile.) Their clothes are ragged, but they are sitting, in the Dark (in misery) and read books and write, move to each other only as it occurs to individuals, perhaps to ask or explain. (Light comes from the reader) On the deeper parts [of the stage] many different peoples and races pass by, acting, working, amusing themselves, fighting, robbing, murdering. ***For this music from the Golden Calf Scene.*** Individual peoples continue to storm the Jewish plain, robbing, beating, mocking, murdering Jews and Jewish children. But as many as disappear, there will not be less, there are always young there. When the peoples have passed below, one sees on the front stage Aron, deeply moved, by the Jews on the hill. Then one sees an immense figure, Moses, at the highest height; he has raised the tablets high that are gradually disappearing in an upward streaming light so that only the light shines upwards – Aron sinks dead to the ground
> Curtain **5/V. 1935**

179 *Moses und Aron*, source TP (Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien [T63.08]), see fn. 1, 49. The date "1935" appears slightly ambiguous – is it 1935 or 1938? As tempting as it might be to date this after Hitler's *Anschluss* of Austria, a comparison of other appearances of "5" and "8" in Schönberg's writing confirms Schmidt's and my own earlier estimation that this date is "1935."

180 The formal end of WWI, ratified by Germany and the Allied Powers on January 10, 1920.

Then on the reverse side of the page, undated, we read the following:

> The soldiers: Shall we kill him?
> Moses: Let him go free! And if he is able, so let him live! [The soldiers give way far back.]
> Mouthpiece of the Idea and its destroyer, who uttered what he did not take up, rebellious diminutive

Page 3 [with large number "2" written upper right]

> In pencil upper left: Several persons of the previous Act appear again, in new clothes
> In ink upper right: The scene should be a kind of variations of the Golden Calf Scene, maybe as it were the individual types and inclinations shown to develop (further)
>
> (1) A (A) people of warriors, with swords, arrows and bows at their head, ride a king; behind him someone breaks out, slays him, puts on his crown,
> The train hits another (B) from the opposite direction.
> Fight between the two. The king of the second turn slain, robbed of his crown, the warriors slaves.
> Men from the train storm the hill of the Jews, kill many, destroy them, (loot the books), drag Jews with them as slaves.
> In the back of the train a third people (C) with war chariots and lances appears. They destroy the first train.
> Settle down. Under their hands a city emerges, with fortification walls (which largely obscure Jews) shops, goods, merchants. Below
> Rich and poor Jews.

Page 4r [one line in pencil, no corresponding page number in upper right]

> The scene shows a fortified city

Why Was *Moses und Aron* Unfinished? From *"Somehow"* (*Irgendwie*) to *"You Cannot Solve the Contradiction"*[181]

I believe Schönberg was finally unable to complete Act III of *Moses und Aron* because it led him back to an unresolvable split between his belief in the pure, inexpressible God of Acts I and II – and the armed, authoritarian Jewish state of Act III (mirroring the state depicted in *Der biblische Weg*.) There was finally

181 Kotte Autograph, see fn. 169; *Moses to Aron* in Act III draft, oratorio text, source TC42 [Beiblatt 18r], and in the opera, source TM14 [2r] (c. 1934), see fn. 1, 240, 251.

no *"irgendwie"* – no "somehow" – by which Schönberg could reconcile the Idea with images as he had hopefully scribbled in 1934. In order to govern in the real world, leaders would have to lead with both words and deeds. Schönberg saw how even words inspired by the Idea would inevitably lead to law (the stone tablets) and to power (a staff that would perform wonders). He saw how all of this was a slippery slope from the ineffable God-Idea to a Word spoken by a human mouth, to laws, to power, and eventually to idolatry. Wherever human beings reigned, the God-Idea would once again be contaminated. Only God could directly transmute the Idea into a material image – the pillars of cloud and fire. In Act III, Schönberg seems to have realized that in order for the people to believe in the Idea, they needed to have their Word and to eat it too – manna in the wilderness.

The textual inconsistency between Numbers 20:11 and 20:8 – striking vs. speaking to the rock remained a stumbling block that he himself acknowledged was still preventing him from completing the third act of *Moses und Aron* as he wrote to Eidlitz in March, 1933. He still couldn't *"solve the contradiction"* as Moses says to Aron[182] – whether Moses and/or Aron was to merely speak to the rock (a Word flowing from the Idea), or to strike it (a material action) to bring forth water for the people: *"Up to now I have been trying to find a solution for myself* [...] [I]*t does go on haunting me!"*[183] This letter was written just two weeks after Schönberg's dismissal from the Prussian Academy and as Hitler's accession to power in Germany was finalized – showing the depth of Schönberg's near obsession with this perceived conundrum, even during the now concrete personal impact of the rising Nazi terror on himself and his family.

Why such a seemingly minor variation in a miracle narrative should have been such a deep problem for him is explained only by recognizing that it went to the heart of Schönberg's virtually lifelong theological belief about the inexpressibility of the God-Idea. This belief persisted throughout all his various religious affiliations. Whether during his early conversion to Lutheranism (with Luther's hallmark belief in justification by faith alone, not works), or his more Swedenborgian universalist mystical side as expressed in *Die Jakobsleiter*, or his more Schopenhauerian neoplatonic intellectual thinking, or the *"Einziger, ewiger, allgegenwärtiger, unsichtbarer und unvorstellbarer Gott"* [One, eternal, omnipresent, invisible, and unrepresentable God][184] that he embraced as the bedrock of his belief in his return to Judaism, he remained convinced of the unrepresentability of God, akin to the apophatic traditions of many religions, and precisely aligned with none. He persisted in maintaining a division between action/the material and the spiritual – already significant to him in

182 Ibidem.

183 Letter to Walter Eidlitz, March 15, 1933, see fn. 140, 172.

184 *Moses und Aron*, Act I, Sc. 1, line 1.

Die Jakobsleiter[185] – and to transmute and fuse it with the Second Commandment against graven images in the Hebrew Bible.[186] He was greatly troubled by the idea of humans forcing God's hand by engaging in miraculous deeds – or, indeed, any direct action at all.

As Julie Brown points out, this goes well beyond the usual Jewish emphasis on tradition, practice, and legal observance – only Maimonides came close to the same kind of negative (i.e., non-representational) theology in Jewish theological tradition.[187] Schönberg's theological asceticism took a turn toward purity that went far beyond the usual understanding of Jewish faith and practice.[188] As Aron in his own defense forces Moses to acknowledge, even a word can be an image or an action. Therefore, if *speaking* to the rock was already participating in a degrading of the God-Idea through a verbal enactment, how much more "sinful" was it (Schönberg's own word *"Sünde"*) to actually *strike* the rock with the staff, further alienating oneself from the unrepresentable Idea?

On August 4, 1933, the week after his formal return to Judaism, Schönberg wrote to Webern that his commitment to the Zionist cause might delay his completion of both *Der biblische Weg* and *Moses und Aron*.[189] His theology and his politics were diverging at the same moment of conception of both the play and the opera. Where the opera (Acts I and II) presents an uncompromising faith in an unrepresentable, intangible, nearly unthinkable God-Idea, the play puts forth an uncompromising march toward isolationist victory using any means necessary, including violence (in order, paradoxically, to protect the faith in that same unrepresentable God-Idea.)

Moreover, without the backdrop of unpublished correspondence and essays about Zionism, the play *Der biblische Weg* might have simply seemed like a strange anomaly among Schönberg's other works – a futuristic Zionist fantasy unmoored either from his vocation as a composer or from more serious political activism. But we now know from unpublished archival sources that the play is wholly consistent with Schönberg's strongly held views at the time. After

185 Mark Berry: Arnold Schoenberg's 'Biblical Way': From 'Die Jakobsleiter' to 'Moses und Aron', in *Music and Letters* 89/1 (2008), 84–108.

186 Goldstein highlights three ways in which the opera represents Schönberg's own creative revision and "dehistoricization" of the biblical text – all of which emphasize the unfathomable transcendence of the divine over God's immanence: *"replacing social and political liberation with spiritual or metaphysical deliverance; supplanting a God involved with, among other things, the Israelites' social and historical destiny by an abstract metaphysical entity seemingly exclusively interested in their spiritual devotion; and, finally, displacing the biblical God intimately involved with the people's life and welfare with one unconcerned with their physical well-being."* (Schoenberg's Moses und Aron, see fn. 37, 161.)

187 Julie Brown: *Schoenberg and Redemption*, see fn. 27, 182; Klara Móricz: *Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 236.

188 Julie Brown: *Schoenberg and Redemption*, see fn. 27, 181–182; Klara Móricz: *Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 236–237; Alexander Ringer: *Arnold Schoenberg*, see fn. 56, 53; Goldstein suggests that perhaps Schönberg *"insisted so adamantly on* [God's] *absolute immateriality and invisibility"* due to a combination of factors including a rejection upon his return to Judaism of the incarnational and sacramental emphasis of Christianity, but also a reaction against the Nazis' *"preoccupation with images and symbols,"* especially the swastika (*Hakenkreuz* – literally "cross with hooks"). Schoenberg's Moses und Aron, see fn. 37, 185–186.

189 See fn. 72.

his emigration, Schönberg's militant Zionism took a much more materialist and radically activist approach even than most other Zionist proposals of his time, creating a virtually unsolvable split between blind faith and action; between his own theology and his political views.

A Traumatic Split

While I would now disagree with some of my earlier writings,[190] especially my confidence based on the *"hopeful, nearly messianic vision"* concluding Act III in the oratorio version (e.g., that *"it is inconceivable that, in a finished version of the conclusion to the opera, such crucial personally and profoundly felt ideas would not have been brought to some form of poetically and musically satisfying resolution"*)[191] I still want to defend my earlier view that the opera is unfinished, on the grounds of deeper research in intervening years into the historical context of antisemitism,[192] and also my psychoanalytic training and study of trauma.

This is admittedly the most speculative part of this research. It should be noted that Schönberg was very much against the idea of psychobiography, and there is evidence that he somewhat dreaded it as a violation of his own self-expression and control of his personal narrative.[193] There is certainly very good reason to tread lightly in any kind of "psycho-historical" endeavor, when one cannot have the subject of such inquiry alive and on the couch to talk back! But the insights psychoanalysis may bring to bear on biography need not pathologize the subject, especially when it comes to understanding the historical impact of trauma – both personal and collective.[194] An understanding of how trauma works in both the individual and the collective psyche perhaps might shed some light on Schönberg's inability to complete *Moses und Aron*.[195]

Trauma can be understood as one or a series of highly negative experiences characterized by horror or terror that exceed an individual's capacity to understand, to cope, or even to integrate the experience itself in some kind of

190 Brown rightly corrects my original statement that Schönberg's vision of the wilderness was *"a state of mind, that of renunciation of the truth of God, desolation due to separation from God."* (*Schoenberg and Redemption*, see fn. 27, 110) It is in fact clear in the opera text that Schönberg regarded the wilderness as a place of purification from idolatry and falling into foreigners' materialistic ways, and a place of re-connection with the one, eternal, unrepresentable God.

191 Pamela [Cooper-]White: *Schönberg and the God-Idea*, see fn. 3, 231.

192 Pamela Cooper-White: *Old and Dirty Gods*, see fn. 36.

193 Julie Brown: *Schoenberg and Redemption*, see fn. 27, 18–21, citing several unpublished sets of notes at the Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien (205n32–35).

194 Brown raises important cautions against pathologizing Schönberg on the basis of an over-confident trauma interpretation (ibidem, 28–32, 190–193). She goes on to note parallels between Schönberg's fantasy of becoming the dictator of an authoritarian Zionist movement and Anna Freud's theory of "identification with the aggressor" – unconsciously adopting the violence and power of the aggressor as a defense mechanism – as well as Sándor Férenczi's sympathetic writings on trauma dating from the 1930's (193).

195 Brown reads trauma mainly as discussed by philosophers in relation to "narrativization and renarrativization," concluding that trauma results in "aporia" (the end of reasoning); her sources are not primarily clinical, except for a brief description of Freud's use of the term, and its evolving meaning in subsequent generations of theorists (ibidem, 192).

narrative re-telling. Judith Herman, MD, of Harvard Medical School summarizes trauma as events that *"generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death. They confront a human being with the extremities of helplessness and terror, and evoke the responses of catastrophe."*[196] Trauma experts further have come to understand that trauma is not always a singular event, but that *"complex trauma occurs repeatedly and escalates over its duration. In families, it is exemplified by domestic violence and child abuse and in other situations by war, prisoner of war or refugee status* [...]."[197]

This is not to suggest that Schönberg suffered from a full-blown case of "post-traumatic stress disorder" ("PTSD"[198]). Traumatic experiences do not necessarily lead to PTSD with its myriad dissociative symptoms, persistent negative affect, and disruption of interpersonal relationships – even among Holocaust survivors. Much depends upon the amount of support and recognition that is available in the individual's context in the immediate aftermath of trauma.[199] Good family relations, a welcoming community of musical admirers and Jewish emigrés, as well as Schönberg's own strong will and capacity to face the grim reality of the Nazi horror without retreating into denial, all would have served to support his ability to integrate his traumatic experiences of the rise of Nazism, hate speech, and growing violence. However, his prescient understanding of the extreme genocidal threat posed by Hitler and the Reich, combined with significant health problems, would have caused considerable chronic stress – culminating in the traumatic deaths in the 1940's of several close family members. While his son Georg and his sister Ottilie survived, his brother Heinrich died after being interrogated by Nazi Policeman, cousin Arthur and his wife Eva were arrested and murdered by the Nazis.[200] Like many other Holocaust survivors, Schönberg suffered a near-fatal heart attack in 1946.[201] In countering criticism that his *Survivor from Warsaw*, op. 46 (1947) was not an accurate accounting of the Warsaw Ghetto, he wrote: *"it means at first a warning to all Jews, never to forget what has been done to us* [...] *The main thing is, that I saw it in my imagination."*[202] (emphasis added)

The hallmark of traumatization is a tendency toward psychological splitting – i.e., thinking in terms of all or nothing, pure vs. evil, victim vs. perpetrator, with little capacity to hold good and bad together in the same

196 Judith Herman: *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence – From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York 2015), 33.

197 Christine A. Courtois: Complex Trauma, Complex Reactions: Assessment and Treatment, in *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training* 41/4 (2004), 412–425, 412.

198 *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society*. Edited by Bessel van der Kolk etc. (New York 2006), 79.

199 Alexander C. McFarlane, Bessel Van der Kolk: Trauma and Its Challenge to Society, in *Traumatic Stress*, see fn. 198, 24–27.

200 Mark Berry: *Arnold Schönberg*, see fn. 17, 192.

201 Ibidem, 189.

202 Letter to Kurt List, November 1, 1948 (carbon copy; The Library of Congress, see fn. 15 |ASCC 4802); quoted in Mark Berry: *Arnold Schönberg*, see fn. 17, 192–193, 215n19.

moment or thought.[203] This tendency comes from the experience of trauma as so shattering of one's sense of autonomy, control, and safety, that the individual projects absolute evil onto the outer world (where it is terrifying and threatening), or, in order to preserve the illusion that the world is perfectly safe and good, internalizes badness into oneself in the form of abjection, fear, and failure. When projecting evil onto the outer world, the individual can regard him- or herself as all-good, but will end up living in fear of others; when preserving the all-goodness of the outer world, he or she takes all the badness back into the self. This is what the early psychoanalytic theorist Melanie Klein called the "paranoid-schizoid position," characterized by a never-ending oscillation of projection and internalization of good and evil. The more mature developmental position, she proposed, is the "depressive position" – a form of psychic compromise, in which one can recognize goodness in both oneself and the world – "depressive" because one accepts the tragic truth that there is no purity either in oneself or in others.[204] In maturity, it is the renunciation of the wish for purity, in the service of seeing reality more clearly.

Schönberg was much less in denial about the brutal Nazi threat than many others at the time. He foresaw terrifying, widespread violence against the Jews, and believed the only way to combat it was to adopt the same measures against it – to fight fire with fire. At the same time, the specifics of his personal plan were not realistic. The idea that he could singlehandedly drum up support for himself as the leader of an international, totally obedient and militant Jewish force, when many more experienced and highly esteemed visionaries, rabbis, and public intellectuals including Theodor Herzl were already at the center of the movement, was virtually delusional.[205] Yet it was driven by a highly idealistic purpose, in the hope that he could unite conflicting factions within Judaism to marshal the necessary strength to establish a new Jewish homeland.[206] Schönberg, as the often solitary innovator of a new and daring form of music, was surrounded and in some ways protected from reality by a band of worshipful students ready to do combat against a larger, mostly uncomprehending public, and against critics they could regard as the enemy. He was used to being the unquestioned leader – even "dictator"[207] and genius – and in his own sphere he was seen as such. (Absolute reverence for the leader of a creative circle was not

203 E.g., Judith Herman: *Trauma and Recovery*, see fn. 196, 45, 97, 107–108 et passim; *Traumatic Stress*, see fn. 198, 52–54.

204 Melanie Klein: Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms, in *International Journal of Psycho-Analaysis* 28 (1946), 99–110; see also Pamela Cooper-White: Freud's Moses, Schönberg's Moses, and the Tragic Quest for Purity, in *American Imago* 78 (Spring 2022), 89–122, and idem: Traumatic Visions: Freud's Moses and Schönberg's Moses, in *Answering a Question with a Question: Contemporary Psychoanalysis and Jewish Thought*. Edited by Libby Henik and Lewis Aron (Brighton, MA 2024), 218–233.

205 For various accounts of this effort, see Mark Berry: *Arnold Schönberg*, see fn. 17, 152; Julie Brown: *Schoenberg and Redemption*, see fn. 27; Klara Móricz: *Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 165–168.

206 Arnold Schönberg: A Four Point Program for Jewry, see fn. 52.

207 In his Four Point Program for Jewry, he also unabashedly acknowledged directing his Society for Private Musical Performances as a *"kind of dictator."* Ibidem, 55.

uncommon at that time, as it would be today.) But to presume that he could be granted this status within the Zionist movement, merely by presenting his musical credentials, his passion for the cause, and by force of personality, was naïve at best. None of the Zionist leaders he approached took his proposal seriously.

Viewed through the lens of trauma, however, Schönberg's proposal assumes a quite different character – the omnipotent fantasies of the totally helpless, tortured child, red in the face, fists clenched, who screams in the empty room or pummels in futility at the monstrous abusive father/dictator's chest, or against the bars of the crib or the locked door – or as a last resort, against his own face. The oppressed child, too, seeks to fight fire with fire, meet violence with violence, but in the end, is impotent against the father/dictator's weapon/phallus. No wonder Schönberg's fantasies included a suffocating weapon of mass destruction in his script for *Der biblische Weg*. Such fantasies of total destruction of the enemy/*der Feind* ("the Fiend" as Schönberg put it in his newly acquired English) arise from the kind of psychic splitting described by Klein. By positing himself as an omnipotent leader, he could wage this fight against evil; because of the actual evil he foresaw, to do otherwise would lead to utter despair. The Moses of Acts I and II of the opera ends up in just such an abject state; the Moses of Act III, on the contrary, becomes strong and militant, achieving the fantasized mastery over (real) evil for which Schönberg passionately advocated.

Given the increasing antisemitic violence leading up to the Holocaust, much less the genocide itself and its racist rationale, we can appreciate in retrospect that although Schönberg's expectations of others' obedience toward himself were unrealistic, his frantic efforts to get others to heed his prophecies of the violence to come make his proposals more understandable – in this respect, any "paranoia" on Schönberg's part was also rational, because deadly enemies bent on genocidal destruction of the Jews really existed. As Mark Berry has written,

> the situation continued to worsen abroad – although, as in 1914 or 1933 – nothing was quite inevitable, and not only by definition, until it happened. Nevertheless, in his Four-point Program for Jewry (1938) Schoenberg seemingly foresaw it all, putting many politicians and indeed members of his community to shame. Such early clear-sightedness verges on the uncanny, quite the other side of the coin from that alarming talk of political leadership. Neither should be overlooked, but this is perhaps the more interesting.[208]

208 Mark Berry: *Arnold Schönberg*, see fn. 17, 175.

Moreover, Schönberg's Zionist vision did eventually find purchase in the militarization of the state of Israel in 1948. Just four years before his death, he lived to see the nation of Israel declare its independence, and he was named Honorary President of the Israel Academy of Music in Jerusalem in April, 1951, perhaps his most cherished accolade.[209] Certainly, the birth of an independent Zionist nation, and its further emergence on the world stage as a nuclear power in 1966,[210] was at least a partial fulfillment of his own militaristic vision in *Der biblische Weg*.

How could Schönberg have conceived of both *Der biblische Weg*, with its vision of an authoritarian Zionist state, side by side with the idealistic philosophical oratorio-cum-opera *Moses und Aron*? Of course, the full realization of Hitler's "Final Solution" did not take place until well after Schönberg's prescient departure from Berlin and his most intense preoccupation with writing Act III. But it is evident that his brooding forecast of the violence to come had already begun in the 1920's. The gap in both tone and intent between *Der biblische Weg* and the opera mirror his own sense of being torn between his musical vocation and a political calling. This growing conflict between his art and his fear for the Jews had perhaps, by the time of his work in earnest on Act III, created not just a dialectic between Idea and Representation, but a traumatic fissure.[211] Dialectical opposition is open to resolution through a reimagining of the two contrasting sides in a higher synthesis or *Aufhebung* ["sublation"] that retains part of each side but finds a larger principle to incorporate each.[212] Schönberg's dilemma, however, was more of a polarity between the spiritual and the political, without a resolution. His hope for such an integration was spoken by the character Max Aruns in *Der biblische Weg*:

> To me, Moses and Aron represent two activities of one man – a statesman, whose two souls ignore each other's existence. The purity of his Idea is not blurred by his public actions; and these actions are not weakened by his thoughtful consideration of yet unsolved problems that the Idea presents.[213]

209 Letter to Frank Pelleg, Israel Ministry of Education and Culture, April 26, 1951 (carbon copy; The Library of Congress, see fn. 15 | ASCC 5727); published in Arnold Schönberg: *Letters*, see fn. 55, 286.

210 While Schönberg did not live to see Israel actually build its first nuclear weapon, its testing program was begun during his lifetime. As others in the Israeli peace movement in recent times have written, right-wing nationalism in Israel retains more than a trace of post-Holocaust traumatic splitting to this day. E. Randol Schönberg: Arnold Schönberg and Albert Einstein, see fn. 75; Sarah Bernstein, Executive Director, Rossing Center for Education and Dialogue, Jerusalem, personal communication, 2018/19; *Traumatic Stress*, see fn. 198, 26–27. Zionism exists on a spectrum from liberal Jewish efforts at peace dialogue with Palestinians, to ultra-Orthodox conservative nationalists prominent among the modern-day settlers, as described, e.g., in Ari Shavit: *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel* (New York 2015), and conflict today (July 2024) among Jews over the war in Gaza.

211 Michael Cherlin: Dialectical Opposition in Schönberg's Music and Thought, in idem: Michael Cherlin: *Schönberg's Musical Imagination*, see fn. 9, 44–67.

212 Sublation (in German 'Aufhebung'); https://hegel.net/en/sublation.htm#the-meaning-of-sublation-as-translation-of-aufhebung (accessed February 9, 2024).

213 Arnold Schönberg: Der biblische Weg, see fn. 101, 305; see also Bluma Goldstein: *Reinscribing Moses*, see fn. 3, 144.

But by Schönberg's own definition (c. 1937), a "statesman" was entirely absorbed in the service of the people: *"A statesman has one ideal: His people; one ethics: His People; one thought: His People; one feeling: His People."*[214] Such a definition tilts decidedly toward the political (*polis*) – specifically, the Jewish people.

Schönberg wanted to achieve both the spiritual purity of his vision of the *Gottesgedanke,* and the political purity of a totalitarian Zionist Promised Land for the Jews, the Chosen People, in real time. As psychoanalysis tells us, however, in the face of trauma, purity cannot save. It devolves into the paranoid-schizoid mode of thinking where there is only absolute good or absolute evil. A pure Idea can become destructive as it becomes extreme. Such purity evades the entanglement of both the libido and the death drive. It is the characteristic of fascism itself to flatten, control, and erase difference, whereas creativity – as Schönberg himself taught – must derive from inner necessity. Cultural historian Klára Móricz (2008) offers the most sustained critique of Schönberg's falling prey to an ideological extremism as a form of utopianism, which, she argues, always devolves in its quest for absolute purity into a dystopia of absolut-*ism*, and *totalitarianism* (pp. 1–10, 201–335, 379–397).

The problem Schönberg faced as a composer and librettist was that neither purist vision – either spiritual or political – was possible, and he could not reconcile himself to any kind of compromise or *via media*. Guido's concluding speech perhaps comes closest to being realized in the actual modern world, as the nation of Israel developed its nuclear arsenal – but *Der biblische Weg* depicts a secretive dictatorship with a terrifying weapon of mass destruction, in which the spiritual was sacrificed, or at best deferred to an almost unimaginably far-distant future. Moses' vision of truly ascetic spiritual life, in an austere wilderness existence, had no imaginable future.

Der biblische Weg and *Moses und Aron*, Act II, respectively represent a split between the earlier Schönberg who wanted to continue to believe in a spiritual and humanly inconceivable God, a God of the pure Idea (*Moses and Aron*, Acts I and II) … and a God of pillar and fire who would literally fight for the people against the Egyptians/Nazis, and would somehow lead the people out of bondage and persecution to a land of political self-determination (as in *Der biblische Weg* and, to an incomplete extent, *Moses und Aron*, Act III). It is my contention that the trauma of the Holocaust split Schönberg's thinking in two incompatible directions at once: a purist theological vision of an unrepresentable God-Idea, which he had been cultivating for years, vs. an earthly Realpolitik of Jewish

214 Arnold Schönberg: On Jewish Affairs, see fn. 96; quoted from Bluma Goldstein: *Reinscribing Moses*, see fn. 3, 202n28.

isolationism and protectionism as the only possible form of self-defense against the annihilation of the Jewish people. Following Schönberg's own statement to Berg about *Moses und Aron* – that "[e]*verything I have written has a certain inner likeness to myself*"[215] – we can understand how both Moses and Aron, as well as Max Aruns and Guido, resided within him in an irreconcilable tension.

Scholars and critics have shown little appetite for exploring Schönberg's fantasies of political violence. There is no literature to date focusing on the last sketch of Act III from 1935. As a doctoral student and young musicologist, no senior scholar ever suggested that I should examine the progressive changes in the Act III sketches more closely in relation to Schönberg's Zionism. No doubt this goes hand in hand with the reluctance until the last decade to look more closely at the "inconvenient truth"[216] of Schönberg's truculent Zionist views. It is understandable why this should be the case. As Sharon Lamb has pointed out from her study of interpersonal violence, there is a kind of psychological splitting that can be observed even among researchers. When it comes to trauma, even scholars can be caught in an unconscious bias that assumes perpetrators of violence to be all-bad and victims all-good – entirely innocent, and incapable of fantasies of harm or revenge.[217]

Extrapolating to studies of the Holocaust, perhaps we can also draw a parallel to the preference in the decades since WWII for the view of the Jews as "lambs to the slaughter," and the all-too-common occurrence of Jews remaining in denial, aided by hopes for assimilation after loosening of restrictions in the late 19th century. Yet Schönberg was not alone in the 1920's and 30's in his calls for a more muscular resistance to Nazi oppression – memorialized in his 1947 *Survivor from Warsaw* with its powerful conclusion in a setting of the "Shema Yisroel" as a testament to survival of the Jewish people.[218] Historians, and musicologists in particular, may have found it difficult until recently to reconcile the image of a musician, composer, and artistic genius with the particularly uncompromising and dictatorial version of Zionism he advocated – especially as most of the relevant primary source documents remained

215 Letter to Berg, August 9, 1930 (carbon copy; The Library of Congress, see fn. 15 | ASCC 1931); quoted from Arnold Schönberg: *Letters*, see fn. 55, 143.

216 Term borrowed from former U.S. Vice President Al Gore in the documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*, about Gore's awareness campaign about global climate change, dir. Davis Guggenheim, Paramount Classics, 2006.

217 Sharon Lamb: *The Trouble with Blame: Victims, Perpetrators, and Responsibility* (Cambridge, MA 1996), esp. 88ff.

218 Schönberg wrote to Kurt List in November, 1948 (see fn. 202): "*The Shema Jisroel at the end has a special meaning to me. I think, the Shema Jisroel is the 'Glaubensbekenntnis,' the confession of the Jew. It is our thinking of the one, eternal, God who is invisible, who forbids imitation, who forbids to make a picture and all these things, which you perhaps have realised when you read my Moses und Aron and Der biblische Weg* [*Moses and Aaron* and the Biblical Way]. *The miracle is, to me, that all these people who might have forgotten, for years, that they are Jews, suddenly facing death, remember who they are.*" Quoted from Therese Muxeneder: A Survivor from Warsaw https://Schönberg.at/index.php/en/joomla-license-sp-1943310036/a-survivor-from-warsaw-op-46-1947 (09.02.2024). For more on *Survivor*, see also David Isadore Lieberman: Schönberg Rewrites His Will, see fn. 25.

unpublished until fairly recently. Nevertheless, a current growing interest in Schönberg's political views[219] coincides with a broadening of the field of Schönberg studies and musicology more generally – to take the surrounding cultural context and political landscape more into consideration when studying a composer's works.

Unsympathetic parallels have been drawn in the new millennium between Schönberg's militant version of Zionism and Hitler's own Nazi regime, some more judgmental than others.[220] As "uncomfortable" as his at times fanatical extremist views may have seemed, however, I believe something psychological was also going on in *us*, as scholars who admired Schönberg, preferring not to see his forays into opinions that did not serve well his reputation as a musical genius. Were we not also, perhaps, absorbing by osmosis his own traumatic dissociation and splitting – as well as our own denial and reluctance to examine the traumatic impact of the Holocaust on our own postwar generations? Can we not, now, hold together in our minds both his genius and his moments of irrationality, his creative playfulness and his fears, his rage and his grief?

As the anniversary of Schönberg's death reaches the 75 year mark, and scholars continue to dig deeper into the details of his prodigious archival *Nachlass*, more questions will continue to arise. Certainly no one wants to cast a shadow or bring shame upon Schönberg's legacy. It is my view that Schönberg scholars – myself among them – would not pursue this study of Schönberg in his biographical and political as well as musical context if we did not hold the view that there is true greatness in Schönberg's work, not only as a composer, but as a thinker and public intellectual among the astonishing flowering of creative geniuses of Vienna in the twentieth century. It was an extraordinary time, and amidst the flux between the emancipation of the Jews under Emperor Franz Josef and the rising tide of antisemitism which followed through the 1920's – even before the rise of Hitler and the National Socialists in the 1930's – Vienna was a creative hotbed that gave the rising Jewish intelligentsia of the time an unparalleled view from the margins, to take the best of high German art and thought from the 19th century and turn it into revolutionary movements that we are still digesting and profiting from to this day.

As more questions arise from a deeper scrutiny of the sources, so may more "inconvenient truths." The repressed always returns, as does the memory of trauma. Memories of violence inevitably re-emerge, even when

219 As in Klara Móricz: *Jewish Identities*, see fn. 24, 245–247; Julie Brown: *Schoenberg and Redemption*, see fn. 27, 1–7, 190–196.

220 Among the most negative are Móricz (ibidem); Brown (ibidem); Jan Assmann: Moses Tragicus, see fn. 4; and Richard Taruskin: The Dark Side of Modern Music: The Sins of Toscanini, Stravinsky, Schoenberg (Review of Harvey Sachs, Music in Fascist Italy), in: *The New Republic* 99/10 (September 5, 1988), 28–30, 32–34.

long repressed.[221] In Schönberg studies we are left with a gash, a wound, as aspects of Schönberg's *Nachlass* reveal him to be a less "innocent" – but more prophetic – survivor of the Holocaust, whom no one even a few decades ago preferred to look at too closely. Just as Schönberg's "uncomfortable" Zionist views are now coming under closer scrutiny, so, I believe, more questions have emerged about *Moses und Aron*, Act III. In the very last Act III text source from 1935, he leaves us a work still divided between two separate visions on separate pages: the triumph of the Law as Idea,[222] vs. a fortified city[223] – but in either scene, the Jewish people are depicted as an emergent remnant, survivors of a bloody massacre.

Conclusion

How could Schönberg have reconciled the fledgling triumph of his own Zionist vision with the vision of a God who could only be worshipped in silence rather than in word and deed, amid the all-too-recent memory of the murder of so many of his own family members, friends, colleagues, and millions of other Jews?[224] Adorno and others wanted to preserve deep philosophical questions about Idea and Representation and the artist's impossible task to somehow grasp the ungraspable, represented by Moses' anguished cry at the end of Act II. Such abstruse questions of speaking to the rock vs. striking the rock may finally have come to seem so abstract as to become irrelevant to Schönberg in the face of so much real bloodshed. It was not the suddenly militant, authoritarian world of Act III that must have seemed out of place to Schönberg in the last years of his life in the wake of the Holocaust, but on the contrary, in a shattered world, how could one entertain the possibility of an unfathomable God of Acts I and II who did not reward or punish according to any comprehensible human ethic, in other words – who could allow such evil to happen? Perhaps the opera's philosophical questions had been punctured by what Bruno Bettelheim called *"the extreme situation"* of the Holocaust,[225] and in the end remained unfathomable, suspended in Schopenhauer's neo-Platonic ether.

221 Judith Herman: *Trauma and Recovery*, see fn. 196, 1.

222 Arnold Schönberg: *Moses und* Aron, source TP1 [1r], see fn. 1, 258.

223 Ibidem, source TP12 [4r] and TP12 [3r].

224 Van der Kolk specifically cites the case of a Holocaust survivor whose close relatives were murdered, and the posttraumatic sequelae that only emerged much later in life, in *Traumatic Stress*, see fn. 198, 361–62.

225 Bruno Bettelheim: Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations, in *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 38 (1943), 417–452.

The urgent necessity Schönberg saw in the Realpolitik of *Der biblische Weg* took form in his imagination in Act III, as he continued to work his way through tortured drafts with increasingly nightmarish scenes of violence reflecting the growing violence in his once-beloved Germanic world. The paradoxical question of Acts I and II, whether the inexpressible of the divine Idea could ever be expressed (even by the artist, even in music) was not only unanswerable – perhaps it no longer deserved to be answered. And so, after a few musical annotations for Act III scratched out in 1937,[226] he simply stopped.

Schönberg then began to pour his creative energy into a statement of his political vision in "Four Point Program for Jewry,"[227] written in October of the following year, six months after Hitler's Anschluss/Annexation of Austria (but never published in his lifetime). Around the same time, he crafted a moving musical expression of grief and repentance, as well as a vision for the mission of the Jewish people, in his *Kol Nidre*, op. 39, on commission from a prominent Los Angeles rabbi, Jacob Sonderling.[228] The "Four Point Program" begins with a detailed enumeration of seven million Jews from all parts of Europe whom he predicted with frightening foresight would have to migrate or die: *"Are they condemned to doom? Will they become extinct? Famished? Butchered?"* At the beginning of this long essay, he laid out his plan:

I. THE FIGHT AGAINST ANTISEMITISM MUST BE STOPPED. [Schönberg saw liberal efforts to end hatred of Jews to be naïve, futile, and a dangerous waste of time leading to unnecessary martyrdom]
II. A UNITED JEWISH PARTY MUST BE CREATED.
III. UNANIMITY IN JEWRY MUST BE ENFORCED WITH ALL MEANS.
IV. WAYS MUST BE PREPARED TO OBTAIN A PLACE TO ERECT AN INDEPENDENT JEWISH STATE.

His fervent Jewish nationalism was, finally, grounded in his religious beliefs: *"What makes us a nation is not so much our race, as our religion. That we are God's chosen people is a part of his religious belief that no Jew has yet abandoned. Accordingly, we belong together on account of our religion."* The "Four Point Program" restates themes from *Der biblische Weg* in ways that the unfinished Act III of *Moses und Aron* never could. Traumatized not only by the horrors he had already seen, but the horrors he so presciently foresaw, Schönberg remained dedicated – however privately in later years – to a Zionist vision of safety and freedom for a unified Chosen People devoted to the *"one, eternal, omnipresent, invisible, and unrepresentable God."*

226 Source Ae, see fn. 159.

227 A Four Point Program for Jewry, see fn. 52; rejected by publishers including Thomas Mann at the time.

228 For a good discussion of this piece and its meaning for Schönberg, see Kol nidre – Milken Archive of Jewish Music, https://www.milkenarchive.org/music/volumes/view/masterworks-of-prayer/work/kol-nidre/#linernotes (09.02.2024).

Schönberg's *Kol Nidre* represents the emotional side of repentance and return to the Jewish faith, as he became fascinated with the text as a statement of renunciation of any vows taken in the previous year – including conversion to Christianity (that vow of his own, years earlier) – and a personal recommitment to the Jewish faith and mission:

> All vows and oaths and promises and plights of any kind, wherewith we pledged ourselves counter to our inherited faith in God, Who is One, Everlasting, Unseen, Unfathomable, we declare these null and void. We repent that these obligations have estranged us from the sacred task we were chosen for.[229]

Act III had returned, or regressed, depending on one's point of view, from Idea to deed, and from wilderness to authoritarian state. Schönberg could no longer hold this concrete political vision together with the unanswerable theological questions of Acts I and II. He still believed in an unrepresentable and unfathomable God, but this God could not be counted on to save the Jewish people in their time of peril. It was now up to the Jews themselves, even if they had to arm themselves, to survive in the wilderness of the world's seemingly unending persecutions.

So faith itself, as Schönberg continued to express it in his final religious works, would not rest in God's ineffable presence alone, but also in the tenacity of the people themselves, in their yearly return to the wilderness of atonement and recommitment. Voices of resistance against persecution would always arise, even in the very midst of slaughter, as in the end of Schönberg's *Survivor from Warsaw* (1947). To grieve, to refuse to be dehumanized was now the mission of a people unified in the belief in the intangible but powerful God-Idea, and *"To survive in exile, uncorrupted and unbroken, until the hour of salvation comes"*[230] – and to pray.[231]

Wer bin ich, daß ich glauben soll, mein Gebet sei eine Notwendigkeit?	Who am I, that I should believe my prayer to be a necessity?
Wenn ich Gott sage, weiß ich, daß ich damit von dem Einzigen, Ewigen, Allmächtigen, Allwissenden und Unvorstellbaren spreche, von dem ich mir ein Bild weder machen kann noch soll … Und trotzdem bete ich …	When I say "God," I know that I am speaking of the One, Eternal, Almighty, Omniscient and Inconceivable, of whom I neither can nor should make an image … And yet I pray …

229 Ibidem.

230 Letter to Kandinsky, May 4, 1923, see fn. 32, 82.

231 For more on Schönberg's *Modern Psalm,* op. 50C, and prayer, see Mark Risinger: Schönberg's 'Modern Psalm,' Op. 50c and the Unattainable Ending, in *Political and Religious Ideas in the Works of Arnold Schönberg*, see fn. 25, 289–306.

O, Du mein Gott, deine Gnade hat uns
das Gebet gelassen, als eine Verbindung,
eine beseligende Verbindung mit Dir.
Als eine Seligkeit, die uns mehr gibt, als
jede Erfüllung.

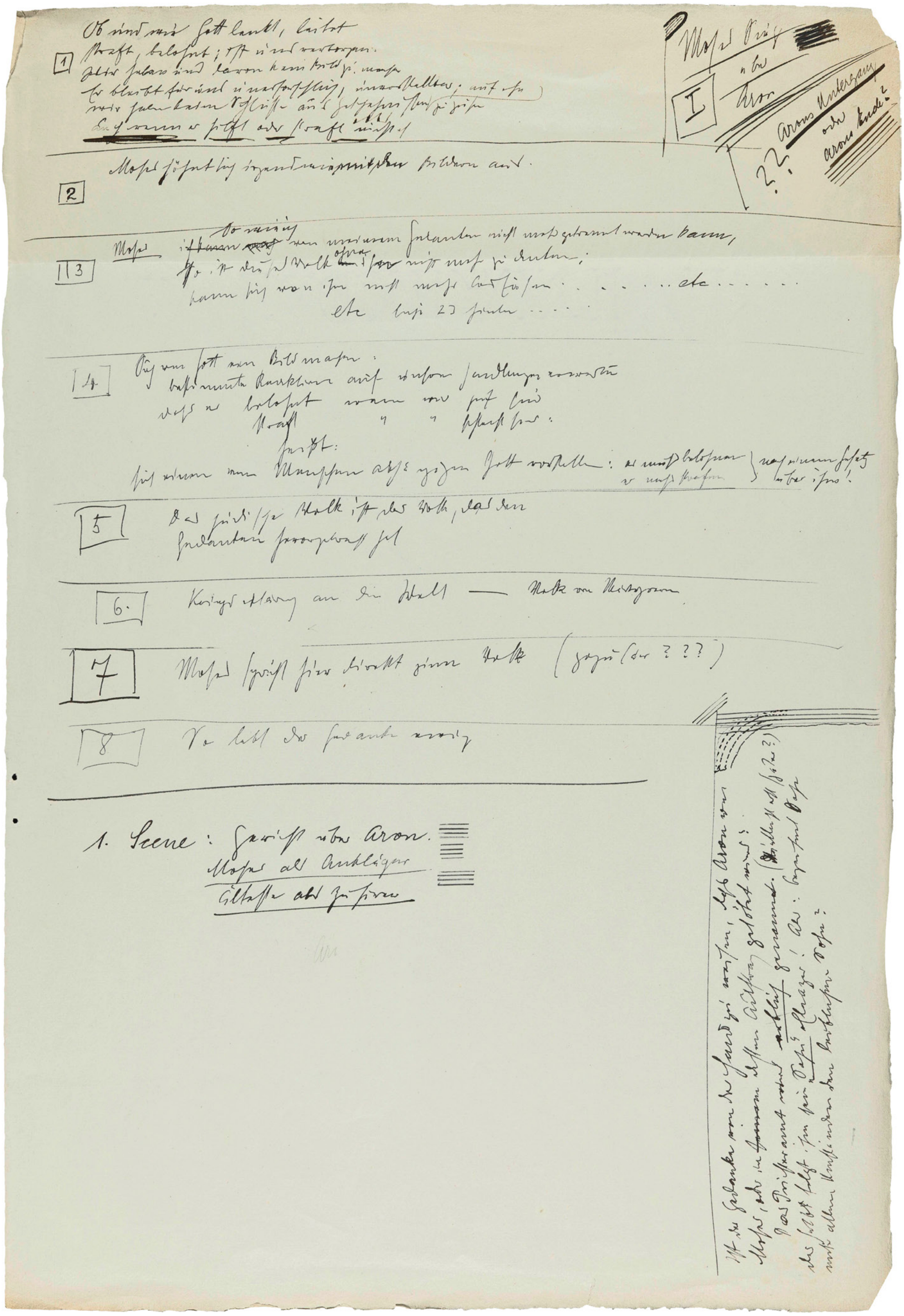
O Thou my God, thy grace has
left us prayer, as a connection,
a blessed connection with Thee.
As a blessing that gives us more than
any fulfillment.

Arnold Schönberg, *Moderner Psalm*, op. 50c

The Kotte Autograph

Based on a German Transcription by
Julia Bungardt-Eckhardt[1]
English Translation by Pamela Cooper-White

Key: Ink is represented in black type, pencil in gray type. Brackets [] signify inserted material (except when indicating page number). Original pages are not numbered; numbers were deduced from staple marks and folds. Question marks, spacing, and underlining follow the original handwritten manuscript as closely as possible.



1
2
Moses
3
etc
4
5
6.
7
8
I
Aron
Arons Untergang
oder Arons Ende?
??
1. Scene

[Overleaf]

1 Whether and how God directs, guides
punishes, rewards; is hidden from us.
We are not allowetd to make an image of this[2]
For us he remains unfathomable, inconceivable;
We are not allowed to draw any conclusions about him from events
Not even whether he helps or punishes

Moses' Victory
Over
I Aron
Aron's Downfall
or
?? Aron's End?

2 Moses somehow reconciles himself with the images.

3 Moses ~~I can~~ Just as I can no longer be separated from my Idea,
so this people can no longer be thought of apart from the Idea ~~with~~;
can they release themselves from this any more [?] . . . . . etc. . . . . .
etc. see page 23 later . . . . .

4 To build oneself an image of God:
expect a certain reaction to our actions
that he should reward if we are good
punish " " are bad:
meaning:
to conceive of a God dependent on humankind: he must reward } according to a law
he must punish } over him!

5 The Jewish people are the people that
gave birth to the Idea

6 Declaration of war to the world – a people of martyrs

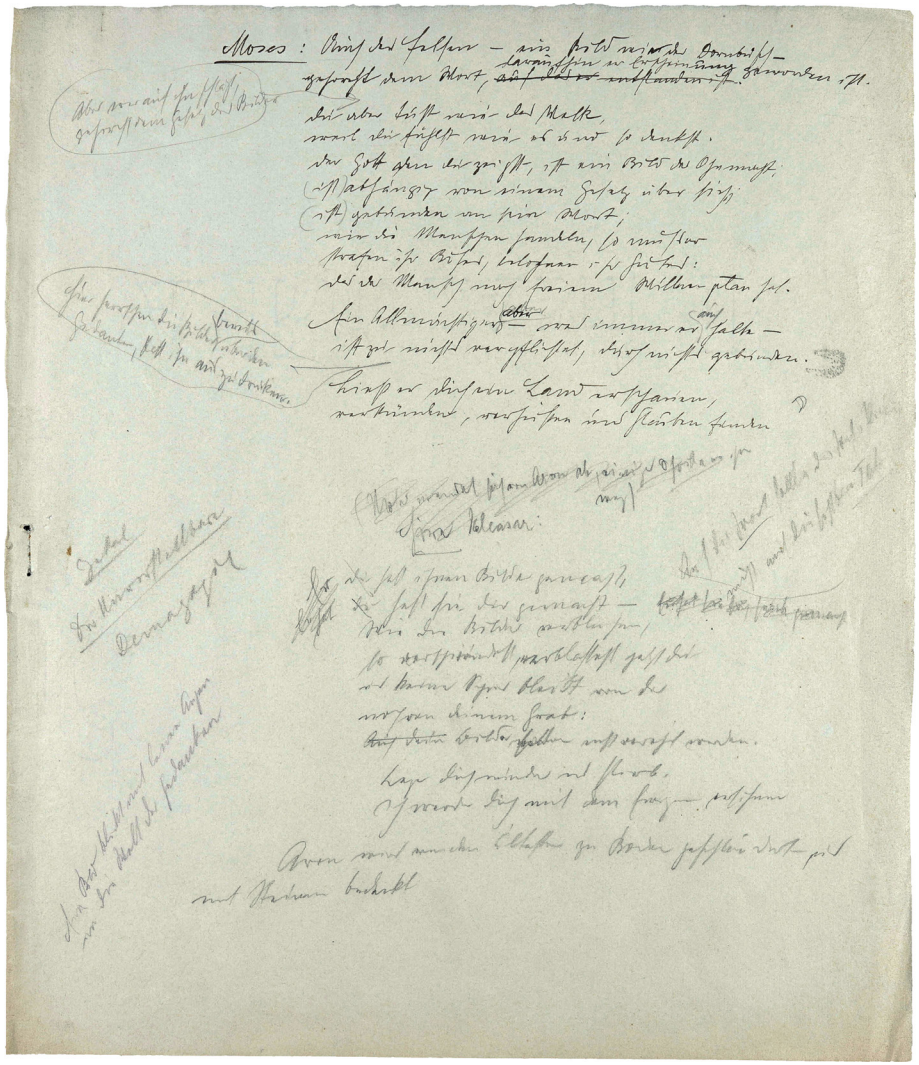
7 Moses speaks directly here to the people (popular ? ? ?)

8 So the Idea lives forever

1st Scene: Judgment over Aron
Moses as accuser
Elders as listeners

Aro

Is the idea that Aron is killed by Moses, or by ~~his~~ whose
commission to be dismissed out of hand?
The priesthood is described as hereditary. (Perhaps later?)
so that is why his "son" Eleazar follows him! But: does son mean
the biological son under all circumstances?



[page 1]

Moses: Even the rock – an image like the thorn bush –
from which it [the rock] became manifest.
Obeys the Word, ~~from which it originated~~.

But whoever strikes it;
obeys the law of images.

You, however, act like the people,
because you feel and therefore think as they do,
the God that you show them is an image of powerlessness;
(is) dependent on a law greater than itself
(is) bound by his Word;
the way people behave, so he must
punish their evil deeds, reward their good:
which people have done as a result of free will.
An Almighty, however [– who keeps this attribute forever –]
is obligated to nothing, bound by nothing.

Here images rule over the
Idea, instead of expressing it.

He allowed you to behold a land,
to proclaim, to draw toward, and to find faith

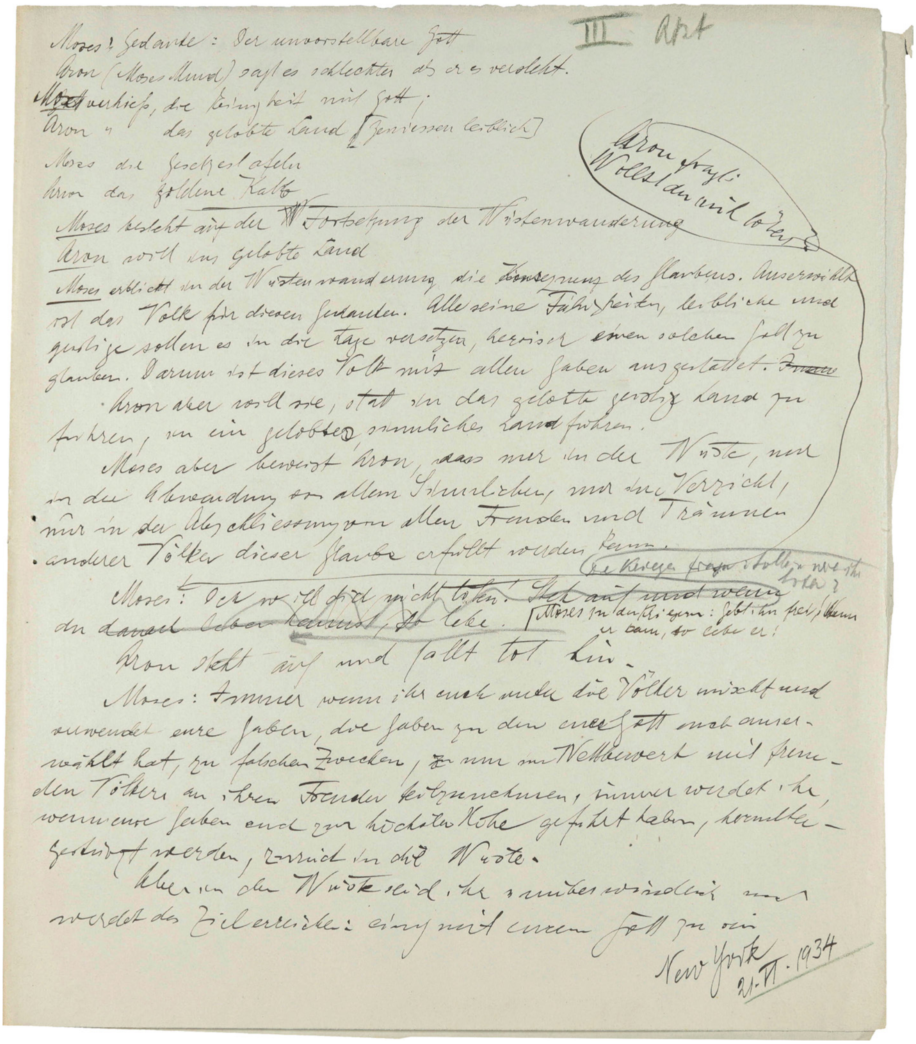
~~(Moses turns away from Aron, some pushes him away)~~
~~Here Eleasar:~~

Jubilation
The Unrepresentable
Demagogy

The Word also falls (does not
hold) the [illegible]
and the [illegible] fact

[~~he/it~~] ~~you~~ made them images,
[~~he/it has~~] ~~you~~ made them for yourself – ~~*illegible crossed-out phrase*~~
as images fade
so you disappear, you fade now
and no trace of you remains
not even of your grave:
~~Also your~~ images shall [?] not be revered
Lie down and die.
I will reconcile you with the Eternal.
Aron is hurled to the ground by the Elders and
covered with stones.

An image looks with [illegible] eyes[3]
into the world of Ideas[4]



III Akt

Moses: Gedanke: Der unvorstellbare Gott

Aron (Moses Mund) sagt es schlechter als er es versteht.

~~Moses~~ verhieß, die Einigkeit mit Gott;

Aron " das gelobte Land [Genießen leiblich]

Moses die Gesetzestafeln

Aron das goldene Kalb

Aron fragt: Wollt du mich töten?

Moses besteht auf der ~~W~~ Fortsetzung der Wüstenwanderung

Aron will ins gelobte Land

Moses erblickt in der Wüstenwanderung die Konsequenz des Glaubens. Auserwählt ist das Volk für diesen Gedanken. Alle seine Fähigkeiten, leibliche und geistige sollen es in die Lage versetzen, heroisch einen solchen Gott zu glauben. Darum ist dieses Volk mit allen Gaben ausgestattet. ~~Aaron~~

Aron aber will sie, statt in das gelobte geistige Land zu führen, in ein gelobtes, sinnliches Land führen.

Moses aber beweist Aron, dass nur in der Wüste, nur in der Abwendung von allem Sinnlichen, nur im Verzicht, nur in der Abschliessung von allen Freuden und Träumen anderer Völker dieser Glaube erfüllt werden kann.

Die Krieger fragen: sollen wir ihn töten?

Moses: ~~Ich will dich nicht töten. Steh auf und wenn du danach leben kannst, so lebe.~~ [Moses zu den Kriegern: Gebt ihn frei, wenn er kann, so lebe er!

Aron steht auf und fällt tot hin.

Moses: Immer wenn ihr euch unter die Völker mischt und verwendet eure Gaben, die Gaben zu denen euch Gott auserwählt hat, zu falschen Zwecken, um im Wettbewerb mit fremden Völkern an ihren Freuden teilzunehmen, immer werdet ihr, wenn eure Gaben euch zur höchsten Höhe geführt haben, herunter-gestürzt werden, zurück in die Wüste.

Aber in der Wüste seid ihr unüberwindlich und werdet das Ziel erreichen: einig mit einem Gott zu sein

New York 21.VI.1934

[page 2]

III Akt[5]

Moses: Idea: the unrepresentable God
Aron (Moses' mouthpiece) expresses it less well than he understands it
Moses promised unity with God
~~God~~
Aron " the Promised Land [to enjoy bodily]
Moses the tablets of the law
Aron the golden calf

Moses insists on ~~W~~ continuing the wandering in the wilderness
Aron wants to go into the Promised Land
Moses foresees the wandering in the wilderness as the consequence of faith.
The people are chosen for this Idea. All their abilities,
physically and spiritually, shall enable them heroically to believe in such a God.
Therefore this people is equipped with every gift. ~~Always~~

But Aron, instead of leading them into the promised spiritual land,
wants to lead them into a promised sensual land.

But Moses proves to Aron that only in the wilderness, only
in the turning away from all that is sensual, only in renunciation,
only in the foreclosure of all the joys and dreams
of other peoples can this faith be fulfilled.

Aron asks: Will you kill me?

The soldiers ask: Should we kill him?

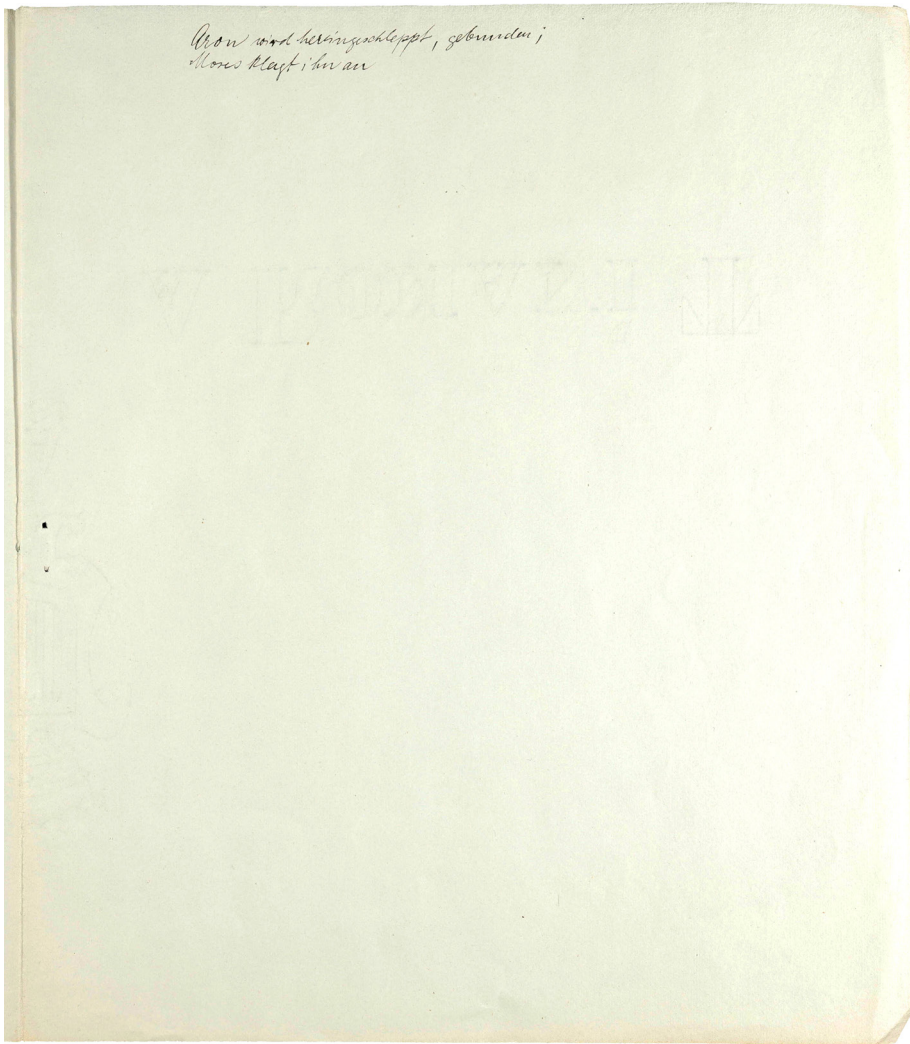
Moses: ~~I will not kill you! Stand up and if after that you can, so live.~~
← Moses to the soldiers: Let him go free! If he can, he shall live.]

Aron stands up and falls down dead.

Moses: Always when you have mixed in with people and used your gifts, the gifts for which your God chose you, for false purposes, that you might compete with foreign people to share in their pleasures, always when your gifts have led you to the highest height, you will be thrown down, back into the wilderness.

But in the wilderness you will be invincible and will reach the goal: to be united with your God.

New York
21. VI. 1934


Aron wird herausgeschleppt, gebunden;
Moses klagt ihn an

[page 3][6]

Aron is dragged in, bound;
Moses accuses him

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

1 Transcriber's source commentary is on file at the Arnold Schoenberg Center, Wien.
2 Wir haben uns Davon kein Bild zu Machen: lit. we cannot make an image of this
3 In transcript: [illegible; 23?]
4 One would expect on the basis of Schoenberg's thinking that "Idea" here would be singular, but here the original handwriting is clear: "die Welt der Gedanken" not "des Gedankens."
5 Large, in crayon.
6 In original source (not transcribed): "Aron wird hereingeschleppt, gebunden; | Moses klagt ihn an"

https://doi.org/10.70482/jasc.2024.19.123-185